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THE LETTERS WHICH NEVER REACHED HIM

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THE LETTERS WHICH NEVER REACHED HIM

LETTER I

VANCOUVER, *August* 1899.

YOUR letter which awaited me here has made me very happy—all the more so because it does not sound so bad as I had feared. It would be almost humiliating if Peking without me were not to appear a trifle greyer and lonelier to you, and I should like you to miss me a little—but not too much. It is all a question of shadings, and you, who have studied colouring on the softest and most mellow of old Chinese brocades, have probably learnt there to find out the very tint which would be welcome to me.

And therefore I thank you for your letter and for so much else.

A

Our short holidays in Japan have passed with that alarming rapidity which is the property of good times. I will wisely abstain from sending you a belated description of our journey, as you know Madame Chrysanthême's home so much better than I do. I will only tell you that I thought much of you there, for, thanks to all that you had told me and through the books you had lent me, I already knew Japan when I got there. It seemed like meeting many old friends. The tea-house girls, who served the rickshaw coolies with the same graceful politeness as us, the labourers who waded knee-deep in the muddy rice-fields; and, during rainy weather, covered themselves with reed-mats, whose sticking-out points gave them the appearance of big, busy hedgehogs: they all seemed like figures out of a well-known picture-book to whom one is inclined to say, 'Oh yes, that's you and *you*—I am pleased to meet you once more.'

But the most delightful meetings I had in Japan were those with the many flowers, whom I had already known elsewhere as japonicum or japonica, and whom I now saw

in their own home, the same, but so much sweeter and more beautiful—just as truly nice people are always the nicest in their own house.

Japan is the first and only foreign country in which I should like to settle and to stay 'for good,' or rather 'for better for worse,' which means so much more.

On our last morning at Yokohama two things happened without which Japan would not have been quite Japan. We were awakened by an earthquake, and we saw Fuji. Till then the big white gentleman had surlily worn a cap of clouds, but just when we were being rowed out to the steamer the mist lifted and we saw the snow-white peak, looking just as improbable in reality as in the thousands of Japanese pictures. And I thought how natural it is that the lonely high mountain-tops are so given to retiring behind cloudy veils, for even to younger and lesser beings than they the sight of the world is apt to become a bore. Out here they say that he who sees Fuji on the day of his departure will come back to Japan. You know that I am just a little

superstitious—*faute de mieux*—so now I will see if my nomad life ever takes me again to that land of flowers and smiles.

The first person whom we met on board our steamer was Bartolo, the great concession-hunter, who stayed so many months at the Hôtel de Pekin, during a time when you were gone on one of your mysterious expeditions to some unknown place in one of the darkest parts of China, whose existence one has to take for granted. In those days Bartolo wished to provide the non-existing Chinese army with a gun of his own invention; later on he tried to sell to the Chinese Government a plan for the irrigation of the Gobi desert. He who has heard some of the many devices which Bartolo and others like him untiringly invented for the benefit of the Chinese, can understand the deep pity with which you used to say, 'Poor, poor China.' You showed, however, far less sympathy with the different foreign ministers, who all possessed some Bartolos by whom they were harassed with demands of political support for their fantastic concessions. In the opinion of the sanguine

speculators the ministers never did enough for them, and these feelings often found vent in newspaper attacks and in parliamentary interpolations.

Bartolo was all beaming smiles, and told us that he had obtained his newest concession, not the one of the Gobi desert, but a more recent one for the right of exploitation of ruby mines. At first he had been somewhat doubtful for which Chinese province to claim this privilege, Kwangsu or Kwangtung, as he did not feel positive in which of them rubies were found; finally he had decided on Kwangtung, after looking the matter up a little in Richt-hofen's book, that gospel of all the disciples of the new faith: 'Salvation through China.'

My brother and I were astonished at Bartolo's having obtained this concession so quickly, all the more as just lately the Chinese have established a board for mining concerns, whose foremost duty it is to drag such questions into endless length. But Bartolo told us that the most influential members of this board were old Tsu and young Tsi—for young Tsi he procured the acquaintance of a foreigner from

Tientsin, as obliging as she was beautiful, and to one of the 'second wives' of old Tsu he sent, under cover of night, a golden tea-set. After that it had all been smooth sailing, and the Chinese only made a few little difficulties about his claim, *pro forma*, and to 'save their faces.'

Bartolo now is on his way to England, to float a great joint-stock company for the working of the ruby mines, from which he expects millions. He had provided himself for the voyage with a lot of tinned goods and special little luxuries, and at all meals on board he sent them freely round to his different friends. He is at bottom very good-natured, and he seemed to wish that we all should partake of his future riches.

It always makes me sad to hear people talk with such evident illusions about all the wealth they intend getting out of China, when I remember the infinite, heart-breaking poverty which I have seen there, worse than anywhere else in the world. Where are all the riches to come from? But perhaps I am prejudiced, as I only know the hopelessly miserable north

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of China: possibly rubies do pave the roads in Kwangtung, about which I know as little as Bartolo.

I must now end this letter, for we are going out into the woods, but I shall write more to you from here, for we intend staying some days, that I may rest from the voyage and gather strength for our further journey. This first greeting is only to tell you that I have landed safely on the other side of the great waters. And now my imagination, which has ever been an audacious architect, builds up a gigantic bridge spanning the ocean from here to China, and a thousand thoughts and memories cross that bridge and travel to you.

LETTER II

VANCOUVER, *August* 1899.

MY letter of yesterday, dear friend, dealt so exclusively with Bartolo, that you might be led to fancy that we had been the only passengers with him on that long voyage, but I will go on writing to-day and tell you about our other travelling companions.

Two Japanese interested me most. They were taking a wee bit of home with themselves, in the shape of a box, two feet square, and filled with earth, in which stones and dwarfed trees represented a miniature garden. They cared for this small garden with touching anxiety. Both evidently suffered much from sea-sickness, and their sallow complexions had gradually acquired queer greenish and purplish tints, but no matter how ill they were, as soon as a sunbeam stole through the heavy grey clouds, they crawled out of their cabin and brought their little box on deck, and as soon as the wind rose they tottered down again, carrying their wee bit of Japan with them. They were going to America to study, and on the way each and all served as object-lessons. They evidently were filled with a great sense of responsibility, especially for the time allotted to them, a responsibility about which most people are not so particular, and which in reality is the most serious of all. Each one of our travellers might have been the small Japanese school child of whom we are told that it was found after a violent earthquake

sitting unharmed amongst the débris and going on diligently with the sum it had begun just before.

There were also Russian travellers on board, and English and Belgian engineers who came back from Peking, where they had tried to obtain rights for the construction of railways, which perhaps will be begun in tens of years, but more likely never at all. I remember so well how you told me that this general scramble for railway concessions embittered the Chinese almost more than anything else. And most of these grants, which had only been obtained by threats, were without any value for many years to come, and had only been claimed to forestall other competitors. In Peking captured concessions were bragged about as the Indians used to pride themselves on the number of scalps they had made. Nowhere as in China have I been so conscious of the infiniteness of space, yet nowhere as in Peking did it seem as if the wide world were not sufficient for the demands of men. The battle of existence was carried on there with that envious jealousy which would much

rather see a country waste and barren than leave it to the hands of others. However rich and big the world is, the weak will always be left empty-handed, for the covetousness of the strong is larger than the largest space.

On the ship we heard endless arguments about the future of China, about 'open door' and 'spheres of influence,' dismemberment and the claims of the different countries. But what in Peking was only hinted at, here amongst these travellers found loud expression with brutal frankness. One suddenly stood face to face with the *bête humaine* as it really is; ever does it find its own share too small and that of the others too large. The secret desire of each was unveiled with harmless *naïveté*: for oneself walled in large spheres of influence, but at the neighbour's house a wide open barn-door.

They were only unimportant, isolated people who talked thus, yet their words opened wide, dreary perspectives on future strife and oppression, revealing the general tendency of the age, its grasping unscrupulousness, its servility before success, and its cruelty towards all those

on earth who cannot defend themselves. The two Japanese listened to all this, and although they said little, one could notice that for them Buddha and his teachings lay in the same forgotten distance as for the others Christ and His Word, and that they had fast acquired the Americano-European precept, 'Eat, if thou wouldst not be eaten.'

It was very foggy, very grey, and icily cold.

Occasionally a passenger would inquire if there were no fear of collisions. But then he was reassured by the answer that in these northern latitudes no other steamers plough the seas, and that if the unlikely were to happen, and we should meet some small sailing-craft, we were by far the weightier, carrying all down before us.

Thus we went on in the thick fog, and in long, regular intervals the fog-horn sounded weirdly.

Some of the passengers had gone to the smoking-room, and others had retired to their cabins. I was alone on deck, wrapped in my warmest furs. The fog had grown thicker than ever before, the visible world seemed

shrunk to the space of a few feet; beyond that range, everything was a uniform dismal grey which rose and sank in silence. An immense weight oppressed me, so that I scarcely dared to breathe—and this weight was a nameless fear of that grey something out there which filled the whole world. A feeling of intense desolateness crept over me. I seemed to be quite alone, the last living being drifting in searching anguish through endless, empty space. And as I thus gazed out into vacancy, the grey masses began to move, to wave to and fro; it seemed as if the wind swept heavy veils away, and suddenly there lay disclosed right before me a sheet of cold, dark northern sea. A rock rose out of it, snow-covered, and carrying on its crags long icicles which hung down to the sinister-looking water. On the top of the rock sat a huge polar bear; his paws were holding the carcass of the last animal he had found in this wilderness, and he looked triumphantly around as if to say, 'Now am I sole lord of the world.' But already the black waters moved and gurgled, and out of them arose

the shining body and the huge fins of a snake-like monster; his walrus head carried a real mane, and from his mouth hung seaweed and the remnants of some small fish—the last he had found in the sea. His glassy, greenish eyes stared about, and they also seemed to say, ‘Now I am quite alone, master of the world.’ But suddenly the huge white bear and the sea-monster caught sight of each other: the enormous fins beat the waves, the cruel paws clawed at the rock. Both were yet gorged with food, but already they were measuring one another with angry looks like future adversaries. They had devastated the whole world, and now they met in this desolate waste for the ultimate fight. That would decide who remained lord of the world.

‘To-day we passed quite near the Aleutians,’ the captain said at dinner; ‘for a moment one could even see one of the smallest islands through the mist.’

But I believe that for a moment the clouds which ever surround us had lifted, allowing me to catch a glimpse of the history of the world; which often is a history of wild beasts.

LETTER III

VANCOUVER, *August* 1899.

WE are still here, and for no special reason but that we enjoy the cool air of approaching autumn and the colouring of the foliage. This short rest gives us the illusion of being like other people who have a settled home.

In most of the streets here, rows of green trees have been planted, and in the morning rosy-cheeked children pass under them going to school on bicycles. Everywhere the gardens are aglow with late roses, larkspur, and asters; bright nasturtiums cover the walls, and along the narrow gravel-paths rows of dahlias and hollyhocks are drawn up in lines, standing stiff and prim. Gardens in such northern countries have a touching charm of their own; it seems as if the plants would achieve as much as possible in the short summer-time, and the flowers, which are in such a hurry to blossom, remind us, that we all do not know how long the time may be measured out in which the sun yet shines for us.

In the well-trimmed gardens stand pretty cottages that all have a comfortable, well-to-do look, putting me in mind of that class of English novels which girls are allowed to read, and in which the heroes take three square meals a day and afternoon-tea with cream and cake besides.

The people who live in this port, surrounded by pine-woods and mountains, all look active and wide awake; one feels at once that they are free and strong personalities who have founded here their homes, as independent of governmental help as they are unhampered by superior tutelage. They are proud of what they have already made out of this remote bay, and for the future they look with full confidence to their own strength of expansion and to the impulsive force which drives their race onward to new manifestations of its activity. For in contrast to so many others, the English colonies rest on the only healthy basis, an efficient middle class, which develops itself freely and untrammelled; whilst in those countries, where the democratic party fights the colonial move-

ment through short-sighted love of opposition, it robs itself of one of the most fertile fields of activity, where the chances of realising its political ideals would be greater than at home. When colonies, instead of springing from the genius of the people, are created by governmental decree, they ever remain but a puny product, reminding me of an artificial homunculus in a bottle, who is fed on chemical pills, and who has never drawn his nourishment from the breast of the great mother Nature.

Here we are far away indeed from those artificially reared colonies, to whom a Privy Councillor in the capital of the mother-country sends, as the most important foundations of a new-born commonwealth, the scheme of a registry for landed property as well as police prescriptions about the hour at which lights must be extinguished and regulations about the muzzling of dogs.

Here nobody wears muzzles.

And people also are not constantly being governed. The laws have grown out of the necessities and experiences of the place itself; they were not imported ready made.

I miss it so much not to be able to talk about all this and a thousand other things with you, dear friend. Who knows when I shall get an answer from you? In your last letter, which I found here, you say that you are soon starting on another of your great exploration tours into the interior of China. I suppose all my letters will have to wait a long time at Shanghai, and will only reach you on your return. How I wish I could give wings to the white envelopes, so that they might follow you on your expedition like so many carrier-pigeons—every evening, when you arrived tired at some miserable Chinese inn, or at a Mongol tent-camp, you would find such a messenger from me, who would whisper to you how often I think of you, and how much I wish that you were never more going out on those journeys into the wilds, when you seem to vanish into space—for I am always so anxious about you.

LETTER IV

VANCOUVER, *August* 1899.

My great joy here is to be able once more to take long walks in the shade of old trees. Whoever has grown up in woodlands will always feel a yearning for them. Trees are like living beings to me, and each possesses an own individual physiognomy and expression, resulting from special events and experiences—just as it is with men also. I can so well understand the ancient Germans who looked upon trees as the abode of special divinities, and I remember that as a child I always had an aversion against St. Boniface who felled their sacred tree.

Often have I spoken to you of my longing for shaded wood-paths, when we had ascended the Peking town-wall after the day's heat was over, and we were walking up and down on that only clean road which the Chinese capital can boast of. Do you remember? Far below us the great town stretched out, all the little one-storied houses of a uniform grey, the

roofs curved up, with rows of small stone lions sitting on their edges. From above we could look right into the courtyards of the next houses, and what we saw there was always the same—the same incomprehensible beings who led the identical existence which other similar beings have led since thousands of years. There was always the unchanging throng of numberless people, who appeared so enigmatical to our eyes in their monotonous similarity, and whose ivory brows are like doors shut on worlds into which we shall never penetrate. Year after year the same crowd passed through the streets, which were filled during months with thick, black, sticky mud, whilst they disappeared during the rest of the year in dense clouds of grey dust. And never was the slightest attempt made to change or to improve anything, for as it was so had it ever been, nobody had known other and better conditions, nobody was disturbed by them—particularly none of those who lived behind the reddish walls and under the yellow glittering roofs of the Imperial Town, leading an existence even

more mysterious and more enigmatical than all the others.

Do you remember how often we have stood on the high walls looking across to the Forbidden City with its pitiable, crumbling splendour? I always had the impression as if a great nightmare-like weight were slowly descending on the whole town, as if the shadows of some terrible coming evil were gradually creeping over it. With what intense feeling of infinite remoteness have I not looked out on the endless plains and thought of other countries where incomprehensibility is not so ever present, where the people speak and bow, mourn and rejoice as we do. On the eve of my departure we have stood once more up there together, and you repeated the words which you had said so often during the last weeks: 'Yes, it is better that you should go—it is better.'

Then we went home across the canal bridge, and as we were passing the small temple in whose yard a curio dealer had established his little shop of queer old rubbish, you said to me: 'Soon you will take other walks in other

countries under old shady trees, as you have wished it here so often.'

You seemed so sad, dear friend, as you were saying that, and yet it was you who urged my brother to accept the appointment in New York, and even made us hurry our departure—why?

And now I am in a country of green, shady trees, and since we are here I go out daily for hours far into the woods. The most beautiful spot here is the Victoria Park, with its ancient trees, its splendid views on the sea, but better than all that, with its repose, its silence, and peace. How deeply would an artist like Boecklin enjoy this forest, which seems yet so near to an undisturbed primeval condition, that I should scarce wonder at meeting fauns and unicorns wandering over the soft, thick moss.

Yesterday I stayed very long in the Park. I had walked on dreamily till I arrived at its farthest end, where it reaches the most narrow point of an inlet of the sea. There the rocky coast falls down abruptly, and deep below the water rushes past. I sat

down between ferns and creepers and looked into the depth of that narrow channel through which all ships must pass that come to Vancouver from the Far East. And I dreamt how delightful it would be to have a little house here hidden in the woods; then I should go daily to this farthest point of land and sit under the old trees and look out for ships coming from far-away Cathay. And at last a ship would come on which you would be standing, and from my rock I should throw a large bunch of wild wood-flowers down to you.

For surely you will only stay in China as long as it is absolutely necessary? Already now, I think out so many beautiful plans for the time when I shall see you again.

When, where, will that be?

LETTER V

BANFF, *September* 1899.

THE early morning sun shines into my room, dear friend, the sparrows are chirping and they seem to mistake the seasons, thinking

still of spring idyls now in the beginning of autumn. I will begin the day by calling out a good-morning to you, out into unfathomable distance. May a friendly breath of air bring my greeting to you wherever you are, and may it be as beautiful there as it is here.

This hotel is built on a wooded hill, and in its profound solitude it reminds me of some mediæval manor in the Tyrol. From our windows we have an extensive view on a valley surrounded by mountains; deep below between fir-trees a little river is running past hurriedly, and it grows into a rushing torrent at the time when the ice melts. In the background rise steep walls of rocks with snow-covered tops.

After the long journey I enjoy all the comfort here. It is delightful to sleep once more in a bed which neither rolls nor shakes, and to take meals without fear that the train could dash off, or that the traveller sitting opposite might get sea-sick.

Close to the hotel is a large, open-air swimming-bath, which is fed by warm sulphur

springs. Firs stand around it, and the tepid water, the sunshine, and the exquisitely aromatic forest air form such a delightful whole that in summer one must wish to stop there for hours. Farther down towards the valley are natural grottos with bubbling springs and deep green ponds which disappear mysteriously under the rocks. The water is so clear that you see on its bottom the glimmering white sand and each little sparkling pebble. I keep thinking here of fair Undine. In such deep, clear waters she surely swam about in unconscious happiness like the little silvery fish, until she rose up to the earth and grew unhappy, because she fancied that it was necessary to possess a soul. What a pity that some world-wise, well-informed person did not enlighten poor Undine and tell her that of all possessions that of a soul can most easily be dispensed with, and that nobody glides better through life than the cold, slippery little fish with the greenish eyes that look so mysterious and deep, and in whose depth there is nothing at all.

We have met here an officer who commands

the Mounted Police of the district. In winter, when the hotel is closed and the whole world far and wide is buried under the deep snow, that must be a truly solitary post. But in summer, and now in the beautiful autumn days, Captain White seems to lead quite a pleasant life. He is constantly at the hotel, and all the ladies seem to look upon him as a kind of Master of the Revels. In the hall, where great logs burn in the chimneys, and the floor and wall are covered with splendid skins and fur rugs, Captain White flirts with blue-eyed, sport-loving Canadians; he flirts with American summer girls, who have thought it more original to spend a season in Canada than in Europe; and he flirts with pale, faded-looking Englishwomen, who come in yearly increasing numbers from Hong-kong, to rest here from that enervating climate. Every day long excursions are undertaken, at which Captain White drives the favoured ones in his coach. He is an excellent whip, but it often looks most perilous when he drives his team up the corkscrew roads, which rise in such sharp curves, that

sometimes the first pair of horses stands just one story above the second with the carriage. He goes on joking at the most appallingly dangerous turns, and he told me much about Canadian winter sports and about the fast-disappearing Indians. 'But they are well cared for by the Government,' he said, with the deep tones of white mankind's self-complacency. Thus it always is: the white man comes and takes a country away from its poor coloured owner, and thinks he has done much for the poor benighted savage if, in exchange, he gives him his own diseases and vices and a little religion on the top with which to atone for them and smooth the road to inevitable oblivion.

Yesterday we drove to the Devil's Lake, which is of the deepest blue and surrounded by high rocky ranges. I was not able to ascertain why it got this name. But it is so frequent in all countries that it seems as an indication that the belief in the devil's ubiquity is far more deeply rooted in the convictions of mankind than the faith in another omnipresence. And probably the belief in ghosts

and bad spirits is really much older than the belief in a god, for out of the fear of mischievous, inexplicable powers all cult has sprung up; its earliest forms are all of a defensive kind, to protect poor human beings from the pursuits of evil sprites—and that is probably the reason why so many people even now look upon their deity as an angered being which must be appeased and propitiated.

This Canadian devil's lake reminded me of a small lake in the Pyrenees which I saw years ago. A small cross stands there on a rock, and our Basque guide took off his broad woollen béret, crossed himself, and said that at that place a pair of lovers had been drowned. Young as I then was, this impressed me very much; but when I had climbed up the rock, I read such an ancient date on the cross that, if the lovers, instead of being drowned, had grown old enough to see their grandchildren, they yet would have been dead long ago. That cooled my emotion. At one time or another a little cross would always have marked the end—perhaps it was better thus.

LETTER VI

BANFF, *September* 1899.

DEAR FRIEND,—The world is so glorious here that I must again write to you. I am afraid that this beginning is not very logical, but you will understand it all the same, as you have always understood everything—spoken and unspoken words.

We have known each other in a country which nobody could call very beautiful; on the contrary, it often was very dreary and ugly, and over all our common memories there seems to float a veil of melancholy; yet now, since I am gone from there, I never feel nearer you than when I see something truly fine and grand. After those three years in Peking, during which nature so seldom showed beauty to me, and during which I only found it in one human being's heart and soul, it seems like a revelation to see how splendid the world is. In the presence of these towering mountains, when the sun shines on the glaciers and streams rush down from rocky heights into deep green lakes, when I breathe the

scented air and look up at those huge trees which may have stood here long before the white man set his foot on this soil—I often ask myself, Is this really the same world? Has all this been murmuring, gurgling, and rushing, been glistening, blooming, and sparkling during the three grey years which I spent in that remote town, where my heart often seemed to contract in oppressive anxiety, as at the approach of a sinister, irremediable doom?

It is such a delight again to be able to find something beautiful, to feel suddenly that youth and the faculty for enthusiasm only lay dormant, that they are still there and only waiting to be allowed to come to life again. It is such a delight, dear friend, to be able to rejoice once more—without any special desire, without any egotistical thought, only to feel once more that unique, harmonious joy which nature awakens in us, which clears and comforts, so that cares, dread, and mourning disappear for a while as in a distant haze. In such moments we realise that we are ourselves a part of nature, notwithstanding all artifici-

ality and torment with which hundreds of generations have weighted us down, and for a short moment we deem it possible to be as the lilies of the fields. For a short space of time beauty delivers us from the great load of all that we have endured, of all we have wanted yet never attained. We breathe once more freely, and we long to tarry and to forget; but already we must return to the cares and to the woes which mean life to us.

But even for this short rest I give thanks to the deep shades of these forests!

LETTER VII

BANFF, *September* 1899.

IN the great peace of these woods, which is so restful to us who for so long have been wanderers, I often remember wonderingly the hurry and strife in the midst of which we have lived in Peking. There the only object of life seemed to be a perpetual struggle and the devising how to push others away and to take their place. I believe that you, dear friend, will understand how refreshing the

calm here is to me who have ever belonged to those that seek nothing. Often when I heard you talking at Peking, I had the impression that you looked down on all the pushing and struggling as from a height, to which petty motives could not reach, and that your thoughts dwelt in a region which to everything mean and paltry was indeed a Forbidden City.

You thought and felt even for the Chinese, whose wishes and opinions were considered by everybody else as a *quantité négligeable*, and who only seemed to exist to be driven by force into so-called progress. How often were the Chinese punished for having let themselves be spoliated by one benefactor, by being robbed even more by the other. Every single power urged the Chinese to make a stand against the demands of all the others, but at the critical moment the poor Chinese were always left in the lurch and never got any real support; they were always abandoned to the tender mercies of the one who most energetically wanted something, and if they gave way too much to the

one for the general equilibrium, the others were not slow to re-establish the proper balance by putting up afterwards new demands on their own account.

Life in Peking thus seemed like a perpetual see-saw.

Nowhere have I learned to despise success more than there, because I have seen from quite close quarters how it is achieved: by some through bribery, by others through threats. It seems as if the poor Chinese, through natural disposition, were incapable of offering any resistance to the charms of money and to the terrors of guns, as if the moral and physical backbone were lacking. And I fancy that if by any chance they ever make a real stand, it is always because there is another power behind them which has bribed or threatened them even more. I remember so well how your friend Li Hung Chang once remained quite obdurate against a demand exacted from him. That was only because a foreign power backed him up of which he stood in even greater awe than of the one which had made the request. And the full

European meanness then showed itself, for Li Hung Chang was abused all round, whilst the power behind very wisely never was mentioned—for of that the others also were afraid.

It has always struck me that the air of Peking has a peculiar influence on white men ; some become there more Chinese than the Chinese, and turn into passionate friends and defenders of China ; this is the case with most interpreters, custom-house officials, and diplomats of the old school. The younger, on the contrary, seemed to be seized by a sudden frenzy of self-conscious hypergreatness, which is rooted in a profound contempt of all things Chinese. They proclaim that everybody has a right to help himself to what he needs, and that he who has the necessary strength should in China at least follow the 'moral of lords,' for thus only can nations and individuals become great. The gist of the matter is that there is somewhere something which they want and only can get by unlawful means, and that is why the great words of patriotism, expansion, new markets, and points of support are

aired; and for this purpose also, otherwise guileless bureaucratic souls drape themselves as so many Cæsar Borgias, as disciples of Machiavelli and Nietzsche. But the 'attitude of lords' can only be improvised as long as you have to deal exclusively with Chinamen; if things grow more serious and the Chinamen have some powerful support behind them, a most unlordlike nervousness replaces the pose of masterful hypergreatness. Notwithstanding all we may fondly fancy, we can scarcely be called a generation of 'Uebermenschen.' We are doubters, scoffers, grumblers; but we have not the stuff of which 'Uebermenschthum' is made. For that we should first of all need to believe in ourselves—and who does that nowadays? If we are frank we will confess that we have recognised ourselves to be but tinsel gods; and tinsel gods may possibly still overawe savages, but they surely do not impose upon their own selves.

LETTER VIII

IN THE TRAIN, *October* 1899.

DEAR FRIEND,—We have left charming Banff. The mountain ranges and the deep green woods lie far behind us. Already a whole day long we have been speeding on through the wide plains. We have looked out of the window; off and on we have read a few pages and we have studied our fellow-passengers. Now evening is coming, the shadows grow longer, and in the purple west the sun sinks down towards other worlds. Grey shadows seem to be rising from the earth; they look at me silently, and in their dead eyes I read the question, 'What have you done with us?' They are hopes, dreams, wishes, and ideals—all things with which we began our long journey in the early dawn of life, and which we then guarded as our most precious possessions. We thought to hold rare, golden grains of seed, from which an enchanted garden was to spring up full of glorious flowers. But instead of being allowed to lay out a garden, we have lost all the

grains on the way, some early, others late. Some have disappeared without our even noticing it; they were blown away, like the pictures of our dreams when we wake are gone nobody knows whither—the memory of them even is dead. About others we have fought to the utmost; we wanted to keep them at any cost, for they were to be the proudest or dearest ornament of the future garden; but they also were torn from us.

In the toils and cares of daily life, which are given to us by destiny as opium with which to forget the greater miseries, we scarcely think of all we have lost. But in the evening hours of long days of travel, when the book slips from our hand and we gaze wearily out of the window, when the train rushes through wide plains and its gigantically lengthened shadow speeds along with us over the waving grass-land, when everywhere around us the distinct outlines dissolve and vanish in a dim, dusky grey—then cold, invisible hands touch our hearts, infinite melancholy, hopeless longing, bitter remembering fill our soul. That is the hour when all

that is lost and dead rises up once more, when we suddenly realise how poor we have grown.

The enchanted garden once more stretches before us, fair as we had planned it in that dim time when we yet had the absolute conviction of being called to a special mission. But instead of that confidence, now infinite pain alone lives in us; we know that we have lost the golden flower-seeds—never can they grow and bloom. The years have gone by, wasted in the hope of that which never came, pined away in useless regret; and thus the best and highest in us has died and the most precious is lost.

And now it is too late.

Fain would we stop Time, to hurry back, start afresh, and begin all over again! But the wheels of time can never turn backwards for us, and the train irresistibly rushes on over the endless plains; like a gigantic monster its shadow spreads over the wide land, like a gigantic destiny ever hurries us onward. Without a will we must follow, we who were not strong enough to be our own destiny, who

have squandered the years and then wasted them with mourning.

And the whole journey? Whereto? Wherefore?

Blessed he who, out of the chain of losses, has saved as an opium for the last hour the belief in a final goal.

LETTER IX

NEW YORK, *October* 1899.

DEAR FRIEND,—After a four days' journey we have at last arrived. Weary and dusty, we reached New York last night, and drove at once to the Waldorf Astoria. I waited in the big hall of the hotel whilst my brother spoke about our rooms with the managers, who remind one behind their gratings of crown jewels or criminals. As I was thus waiting, a crowd gathered around me, which seemed inexplicable, for I felt neither amazingly beautiful nor repulsively ugly enough to justify such intense interest from my fellow-creatures. But the riddle was solved! It was not I, but our Chinese servant, Ta Kwan

Li, whom we have been allowed, only by special permission, to bring into the United States, who excited general curiosity. Whilst he was standing stolidly near me with a travelling-bag in each hand, and the expression of utter indifference on his good round face, his small slit eyes scarce open, as if it were not worth while looking at this entirely new world, many ladies and gentlemen stood staring at him. They called others to look as well, and freely expressed their opinion on his appearance. The Oriental, to whom all this was so absolutely new and strange, yet had the advantage over us Westerners, thanks to his inborn and artificially cultivated tranquillity. He showed neither astonishment nor curiosity, and only murmured, 'When they'll have looked enough at me I suppose they'll stop.'

The immediate consequence of Ta's sensational presence was that reporters from different papers asked to see us. They were full of curiosity about China, and particularly about the Dowager-Empress, who, since her *coup d'état*, seems to be the central figure of

a cycle of myths. 'If we believed in the continuation of Chinese independence? Or if dismemberment would become inevitable? If Li Hung Chang really was bribed by Russia? Which foreign power the Empress particularly favoured? If the disinterested friendly attitude of the United States was well appreciated by her?'

We tried to extricate ourselves from this net of delicate questions, alleging that we were not diplomats, but mere private people; but it was difficult to escape from these professional questioners. Finally, after we had sent word that we were too tired to see anybody, it was Ta's turn to be interviewed. They particularly wanted to know how he liked New York, which is always the first question here. Ta again showed calm reserve and dignified aloofness. He answered, 'that he had only just arrived, and on account of its being night, he had not been able to see much, but as to the New Yorkers, they didn't seem to be accustomed to see many people from foreign lands.'

This morning I got up very early, sat at the

window, and watched the awakening of the great city. We live on the eighth floor. People down in the avenue look like ants, and yet we are scarce at half the height of the building. On the top of the last story there is a terrace which they call here a roof-garden, and in the hot summer nights one can take cold drinks up there, listen to a band, and enjoy the little cool breeze which there may be. On several of the highest buildings of the town, the sky-scrapers, there are such roof-gardens, where all kinds of shows are going on. When they are brightly lit up at night, they seem to hang in the sky like huge, immovable balloons. From our windows we have a splendid view of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-third Street, as far as the waters of the East River, over which nightly mist was still floating in the early morn. The houses opposite us, which years ago seemed magnificent and impressive, have long since been outdone by the modern giant buildings. They loom out of the bluish morning haze like the creations of a new titanic generation which carries unknown possibilities; like the castles of

future fairy-tales, these constructions rise gigantic, all overpowering, and even fine in their way, because one feels that they have grown out of special needs, and are well adapted to their purpose.

The first thing I did to-day was to provide for the adornment of my outer self, for alas! in the light of western civilisation, my Chinese wardrobe does not appear quite up-to-date. I am afraid that Tientai's works can only be kept as relics of a former age! Poor old Tientai, only tailor of Peking, who fabricated everything indiscriminately for the foreigners, from dress-suits to fancy costumes, from ball-gowns to babies' clothes! As I entered to-day the rooms of a great millinery warehouse, and saw improbably thin young ladies with elaborately dressed golden hair parading in the newest creations of fashion between rows of looking-glasses, I could not help remembering willingly the last dressmaker's establishment at which I was but a few weeks ago—the establishment of Tientai! How well I see it before me! A few steps from the British Legation, close to the canal bridge,

the little house stood. Often have I passed there, and escaped from the mud and the holes of the street to the caricature of a sidewalk, which only consisted of a few heaped-up stones. Tientai's door generally stood open, and showed a small low-roofed room, in which several Chinese sat, busily sewing ladies' or men's garments; in a corner of the floor lay a heap of English stuffs, which, made up into 'number one' suits, were inaugurated by the European *jeunesse dorée* of Peking at the spring or autumn races.

How amazed Tientai would be, if he heard that the long suite of rooms with looking-glasses, before which the golden-haired houris walk up and down, is the abode of an American Tientai!

As I gave my name and address, the manageress, the fitters, and the stylish show-room girls called out: 'Oh! then you're the lady who arrived yesterday from Peking? We have read all about it in the morning papers; you're stopping at the Waldorf, and have brought a Chinaman with you.'

Now they all wanted to attend to me, and

each had another question about China, and particularly about the old Empress; the existence of other customers seemed forgotten. But Madame Blanche, the manageress, conducted me into a small sitting-room, and whilst I tried on, questions about China and directions to the skirt- and bodice-fitters whirled round me in wild mixture.

‘Is the old Empress really such a cruel woman?’

(‘Miss Caroline, please take in the waist.’)

‘We have so much sympathy for the poor young Emperor.’

(‘Miss Harriet, tighten the skirt over the hips.’)

‘Is it true that she keeps him a prisoner on a small island?’

(‘Drape that fichu more gracefully, remember: *du flou, toujours du flou.*’)

‘Has the Emperor really got three hundred wives?’

(‘Miss Harriet, lengthen the skirt; that lends a gliding charm to the whole carriage.’)

‘What strange people those Chinese royalties must be. Well, but, after all, what can one

expect from people who never see the real world.'

(*'Soignez la ligne, Miss Caroline, soignez la ligne.'*)

'Of course you have seen the old Empress? And did she really sit on a golden dragon? How interesting it must all have been! But I guess the ladies of the court of Peking haven't much idea about dress?'

(*'Il faut avantager, madame.'*)

'Indeed, there's nothing more improving to the mind than going abroad and seeing strange people. But naturally one can't apply the same standard to them—for they're only poor heathens after all.'

(*'Attend once more to the measurements.'*)

'Thank you, ma'am. You can rest assured, ma'am, that we'll do our best for you. We take a special interest in your clothes, for we've never yet had a customer who came from the Empress of China.'

And so I shall owe it to the Empress of China if my New York dresses turn out to be a particular success!

LETTER X

NEW YORK, *October* 1899.

DEAR FRIEND,—Have you ever heard about Charles W. O'Doyle, also called Chinavarnish O'Doyle? This fifty times millionaire stands at the head of great railways; he possesses mines, ships, and land to the size of a small European kingdom, and he began his career years ago as apothecary's apprentice in San Francisco. How he got there, who his parents were, he would perhaps be at a loss to tell you to-day—but just wait and see: the next generation of the O'Doyles will surely discover that an ancestor of Charles W. was a great landed proprietor in Ireland, who was persecuted under Cromwell on account of his Catholic faith, and having had to flee from the Green Island, finally came over to America.

In America everything is manufactured nowadays, just as in Europe—even pedigrees.

Charles W. laid the foundation of his fortune by a true flash of genius. In San Francisco he had plenty of opportunities to

study the Chinese, who in those days were yet allowed to enter California freely in great numbers, and who, after their death, were shipped back to Canton in equally great numbers, packed in huge wooden coffins. For Chinamen have ever indulged in the troublesome belief that nowhere can they be properly buried but in their own country. But the heavy wooden coffins, manufactured in San Francisco according to Chinese fashion, and the high rates of transport often swallowed all that the deceased had saved during his life, much to the discomfiture of the pig-tailed heirs. Then it was that Charles W. invented a varnish, which he first tried on all kinds of dead animals. Painted with a coating of this lacquer, any corpse can be preserved for months, and even for years; it dries completely, gets hard as stone, and seems to be covered with a yellowish leather-skin. Charles W. took out a patent for his 'Chinavarnish.' Covered with it, many thousands of Chinamen now made the voyage back to Canton. The price of the expensive wood coffin was saved, and the rate of freight was much reduced, for

now the dead Chinamen could be put, like sardines, one on the top of the other, and stowed away into any corner of the hold. They arrived at home perfectly preserved, and very much like the yellow dried ducks which are sold in the San Francisco Chinatown as special delicacies.

This was the basis of the O'Doyle millions!

But since those days, Charles W. has established business connections with the whole world. He left San Francisco long ago, and has settled in New York, but he has always kept up special relations with China. It is rumoured that apart from his great Chinese banking and railroad interests, he holds shares of Cantonese pawnshops, tea-houses, and flower-boats, which he owes to the gratitude of some of his former Chinese clients, to whom the varnish saved some small inheritance. My brother has known him for a long time, and has had business transactions with him from Peking, so Charles W. O'Doyle was one of our first callers at the Waldorf, and last night we dined with him.

His house stands close to Central Park. It has got high turrets and a wide loggia with arcades, from which one looks out on the autumn-tinted leaves of the trees and on the continual stream of carriages. On the sparkling copper-plated roof stand two huge equestrian statues, very similar to those outside the German Reichstag, of which one also feels inclined to ask wonderingly, 'However did you get up there?' The street door is heavily carved, and comes from an old fortified house near Golconda; it is studded with sharp iron spikes which once served to check the rush of hostile elephant riders. Through this door one enters a large white and golden hall. Two Egyptian mummy cases, richly painted and gilt, with lids whose top ends form hawks' heads, stand like sentinels on either side of the malachite staircase which leads to the upper story.

This is a staircase of world-wide fame. Over it men of two continents, who yet were all inhabitants of the world *on l'on s'amuse*, have walked, for its steps once led to that celebrated Aspasia of the Second Empire to whom a

Russian grand-duke had given it as a present. In the great *débâcle* which annihilated the empire, the lady also disappeared. Her house, with all its artistic treasures, was shelled during the siege of Paris, and was finally looted by the communards. An Armenian antiquary, whose fine scent for good opportunities had induced him to remain in Paris hidden in a cellar, bought the malachite staircase for a mere song, and from him the present owner purchased it.

Powdered footmen with stolid, well-fed British faces stood on the landings.

‘When the Duke of Hardup broke down lately,’ said Charles W. O’Doyle, ‘I wired to London and engaged all his servants—so I’m at least sure of having people who have been trained in a decent house.’

O’Doyle is a broad-shouldered, heavily built man. His red, close-shaven face is surrounded by a beard that passes under his chin from ear to ear like a greyish frill. Big pearls shine on his shirt front, a chain with precious trinkets dangles across his waistcoat. His protruding stomach, over which he crosses

his broad, hairy, and bejewelled hands, his good-humoured sounding half-Yankee, half-Irish brogue; his constant talk about his many art treasures and their origin, gave me at first the impression of a conceited but harmless fool—but only until the sleepy eyelids raised themselves under the bushy brows, and I caught a glimpse of his strange eyes; they are cold and lurking, greenish, with small dark spots like the shell of plover eggs—after I had once looked into them, I gladly believed the many stories that are told about O'Doyle's unscrupulousness where money gains are concerned.

At first sight you realise that Mrs. O'Doyle belongs to a former epoch of her husband's life, and that she feels ill at ease under the weight of pearls and amidst her powdered footmen. Sometimes she glances helplessly at her husband, when she finds herself face to face with an unexpected social difficulty, or when she is afraid of having said something foolish. Her frightened, apologetic demeanour, and his cold, cruel eyes—what factors in one of those domestic tragedies which

we daily brush past without guessing their existence.

The poor woman has not even managed to give an heir to the house of the O'Doyles—in this respect also she is an utter failure, and Charles W. has therefore adopted a nephew and a niece. The adopted son was not present, but we met the daughter, Princess von Armenfelde, who is suing her husband for a divorce, because Charles W. does not wish to pay a fourth time the ever renewed debts of his son-in-law. So the Princess must get a divorce whether she likes it or not. She will keep her title, and Charles W. thinks that as it is he has paid dearly enough for it.

Two young cousins of Mrs. O'Doyle were also present. One of them enjoys the noble-sounding Christian names, 'Washington Montgomery.' I wondered what family name might be grand enough after such a beginning, and fancy, he is called 'Baggs.' Washington Montgomery—Baggs. It is like a jump from a palace near Central Park to a tenement house on Ninth Avenue.

Whilst the guests were assembling, Washington Montgomery showed me the splendid pictures which in his eyes derive their principal value from having belonged to collections of princely houses which ended under the auctioneer's hammer.

The second cousin has evidently only just been transplanted to the O'Doyle millions realm. When champagne was served he got quite excited and called out loudly: 'Drink, drink, gentlemen, whilst it's fizzing!'

The dining table was a perfect delight to the eyes. Never have I seen such orchids, except perhaps in the Botanical Garden at Calcutta. I should have liked to admire every single one: the long white flowers which hung in grapes and clusters from the chandelier, the greenish, dark-veined ones, which look like small velvet shoes for fairies to wear at a dance in the moonlight, the tall, pale lilac blossoms on their high, thin stems which seem so proud and unapproachable until you notice their purple, longingly opened lips. Orchids always remind me of some beautiful woman, of whom you at once feel

that she must have gone through strange, mysterious adventures. I wish I understood the orchid language—queer, marvellous tales are surely told in it.

At this New York dinner table, however, stories also were not lacking. As we took up our napkins, a little box fell into the hands of each guest with a present inside—studs, pins, porte-bonheurs, buckles ; everything in the newest of 'art nouveau' taste. Colonel Patterson, a former American diplomatic agent at Cairo, called across the table to his old friend O'Doyle : 'I say, Charlie, why on earth have you done this? There's nobody to be bribed here, I reckon?' And straight away the Colonel plunged into a flood of Turkish bribery tales, which however seemed tame to me, for having heard during three years all the Chinese bribery anecdotes, I think that in this respect the Far East is ahead of the nearer Orient. The Princess, who never forgets the presence of the Hardup footmen, evidently did not relish this conversation, so to change the subject she asked the Colonel what interesting people

he had met at Cairo. And he answered: 'Well, Mrs. Princess, there's a man there called Cromer, who bosses the show, and besides him—well, there was myself.'

But now, dear friend, enough from this Vanity Fair!

May my letter find you well wherever you are, and may you not stay too long there, as 'there' is so far from me.

LETTER XI

NEW YORK, *November* 1899.

TO-DAY old Mr. Bridgewater and his daughters came to see me. He has spent many years in Europe, and was United States minister at Petersburg, where my brother and I had known him. Now he lives with his daughters in New York and in Tuxedo Park. He is at the head of some large charitable institutions, he writes and he often travels with that American facility about which there is something godlike, for it seems to be above space, time, and money.

Mr. Bridgewater spoke about the great

changes which have taken place here in public opinion and in political views since the war with Spain. To the traveller who has not been here for some years, the changes are immediately noticeable in the enormously increased general self-reliance. The whole nation seems penetrated by the belief of being called to achieve a special end—a conviction through which so many great aims have already been attained. America considers herself as the politically chosen one of the Lord. And it is an amusing mixture of feelings before which the onlooker stands: on the one hand, quite dry, prosaic calculations as to future commercial advantages which are to be obtained, and side by side with these, an almost religious enthusiasm for the mission of bringing light and liberty to others. And by 'others' the Americans not only allude to savage people, for with regard to those we all cherish the same pretension of being traders and politico-religious apostles combined—but, on the contrary, they mean us poor benighted Europeans. America begins to stretch out her feelers in all directions,

and probably could not do otherwise even if she would, for one gets here the impression of an accumulated mass of strength, which impatiently waits for the moment of manifesting itself, which probably has not even a choice in the matter, but which is driven onward through the logic of things to search for wider boundaries and to assert itself in ever new questions.

As the individual American always has felt himself to be the equal of the best of any people, and just as he knows of no limit for his personal enterprise, thus America as a nation now considers herself capable and entitled to obtain all she wants. And what America wants is the world. Well, everybody who has the slightest chance of it wants the world, but the chances of America are amazingly good ones. The Americans' outlook is so favourable because they apply to all undertakings their great sense of the practical and their inborn gift of organisation, because they are a nation of independent men, who, taken at an average, are superior to the Europeans. Originally they descend from those

who found themselves too much hampered and confined in old Europe, from men who were driven by their love of independence into new worlds where their personality could develop unfettered. This inherited quality forms the fundamental trait of the new race, and it has bred a higher initiative and sense of personal responsibility than in the old world. The first thing which the American learns is to provide for himself, without relying on the guidance of others.

A consequence of the Americans' strong, healthy youthfulness is that they do not yet know the political nervousness from which so many suffer in Europe. They never use the soothing draught formula so common in some European countries, 'Leave others to conquer colonial possessions, they'll bleed to death through them,' a phrase which sounds about as convincing as if a eunuch tried to console himself by saying that one can easily get into trouble through love adventures. The North Americans, on the contrary, have begun by declaring their whole continent taboo, and they would like best to extend the doctrine

over the whole world, and particularly over the countries of the Far East, which preoccupy them much since they obtained a footing out there. For the present only peaceful commercial expansion is talked about in America ; but surprises are of frequent occurrence on that road, and since the Spanish war, America possesses a party which dreads nobody and which feels equal to all. These people would be ready to cope with any one, and Mr. Bridgewater said by preference with the one whom they consider as the most dangerous competitor. Mr. Bridgewater added that they thought of England as the least likely enemy. With their former mother the Americans would like to form a kind of gigantic political trust for the final settlement of the world.

‘In that business association I doubt you’re being the gainers, however smart you may be,’ I answered Mr. Bridgewater.

This, dear friend, is a picture of the world’s future, as an American painted it to me. I send it to you into that far-off country, whose prosaic sons only live in the care of the present and never seem to indulge in speculations

about the days to come. And yet, perhaps this very people may be destined to become a powerful agent in the world's future, for over us all stands destiny, and it often forces individuals and nations to further ends the exact reverse of those which they wished to serve.

LETTER XII

NEW YORK, *November* 1899.

DEAR FRIEND,—We have spent a charming evening at the Bridgewaters'. To see their house is a perfect treat. All the rooms are arranged with individual taste, and filled with beautiful things which Mr. Bridgewater and his artistic daughters have brought home from their travels. The house has its own physiognomy, lives spent there have left their trace, and it remains engraven in the memory like a well-defined personality. Old Mr. Bridgewater was born in this house, and he now lives in it with his children and grandchildren—that alone is a curiosity in New York.

After the feast at the O'Doyles' this dinner

was like the revelation of a different American world, and yet both houses are only a few blocks apart. But we hear so much about American quality, about the President's indiscriminate handshaking, that we could easily be led to fancy that American society is like a clear soup in which only a few Vanderbilts swim about like so many dumplings. Nothing, however, could be more erroneous, for the society here is divided into ever so many sets, which are separated by wide gulfs. As they all are Americans, I suppose they have certain racial qualities in common, but between the O'Doyles and the Bridgewater sets, for example, there exists a difference as between a piece of raw beef and tournedos à la Rossini served at Sherry's. And the Tournedos take precious good care that none of the Rawbeefs should smuggle into their domain. The Americans have already far surpassed us in the love for aristocratic exclusiveness. And everybody here who has a certain standing to keep up must be so very particular whom he associates with, because there exists no single individual in America so highly placed

that he or she could give an unquestioned social consecration to somebody else. Lately I heard an American lady say that she found those European towns where there are courts so very convenient because there she could invite the people that were bidden to the small select court functions and be quite sure of having socially desirable guests at her house; she added, she did not mean those, of course, who were only seen at court at the great round-ups, because at such gatherings there was always a good deal of mixture.

But in America there is no such official hair-sieve. Here everybody must use his own.

At Mr. Bridgewater's they evidently sieve very carefully, and I have met there very pleasant people. I believe the guests were all rich. But my only reason for this supposition is that they seemed to consider so many things as absolutely indispensable, of which I know how expensive they are here. None of them mentioned money or business. I believe one could call them a set of intellectual aristocrats.

At dinner I sat next to Mr. Anstruther, who belongs to the club of the forty most amusing and witty men of New York. He was very nice and entertaining, but unfortunately he did not say anything so strikingly amusing that it might not also have been found outside that club. I waited the whole evening for it, as for the set-piece at a firework show. But only single rockets rose up.

A good deal of self-reliance must be needed to apply for the membership of this club! I asked what happened if a man was black-balled, if he then had to wear to his life's end a label marked, 'This is a bore.' Mr. Anstruther answered, 'No; in that case the man goes home, writes a book, and calls it "A clever book by a bore."'

'That is more probable than it sounds at first,' said Mr. Bridgewater, 'for it is easier perhaps to write a clever book than to be amusing in daily life. Books are written with the *esprit d'escalier* which many people possess, but to be amusing in daily life you require the much rarer gift of repartee, and more than anything else, a sense of humour.'

‘And because of this very sense of humour amusing people are seldom merry,’ said Anstruther, ‘for humour sees the sad ludicrousness of life, the contradiction between aspirations and achievements, between what one fancies and that which really is. Therefore humour seldom is to be found in very young people, it grows with the years, and in the same measure as it increases the faculty for true mirth diminishes.’

As Mr. Bridgewater has lived so long abroad, foreigners are frequent guests at his house, and at this dinner we met a Russian widow, Madame Baltykoff, a literary woman, whom Mr. Bridgewater has known at Petersburg and who has come to New York to study American life and to write the inevitable book about it. Madame Baltykoff is young and pretty, full of interest and admiration for American institutions, and naturally the Americans respond to this by being in their turn enthusiastic about Madame Baltykoff. Anstruther seems to be particularly taken with her. I like her way of jumping from enthusiasm into wit and irony, leaving every-

thing an open question. *Feu sacré* and *blague* in almost equal proportions—a truly Slav mixture.

The Americans who were present were all travelled and highly cultured people, particularly the women, but as far as I could make out none of them takes an active part in American politics. They were evidently proud of their country, but they seemed to look upon it as a very fast train in which they all were willing to travel, but whose inner management and greasing of wheels they gladly left to others. For in America it is often just the best who show a certain standoffishness where public service is concerned—well, so much the better, for as it is they're a dangerous enough competitor.

Old Mr. Bridgewater seemed the one most interested in public life, which may be the effect of his having lived so long in those foreign countries where an ever so slight connection with officialdom and world-management lends glory, just as here even distant relationship to the Astors or Vanderbilts does. By a natural tendency, where Mr.

Bridgewater is concerned, conversation drifted to the topic of imperialism and 'the growing importance of the United States.' Mr. Bridgewater said: 'I should like to write a book about the "Advent of North America into the Concert of the Powers," for that is the most important fact at the end of the century, and it does not only mean a shifting in the distribution of actual might, but it will have far-reaching intellectual consequences. Through growing relations with us the Europeans will become influenced by our modes of thought. We are accustomed to hear all subjects widely discussed in which we are in any way interested and to be fully informed about them, and you can already notice, that whenever America is concerned in a world question, that question is freely dealt with by the papers, such as is never the case in purely European concerns, and the greater the number of affairs in which America takes a hand, the more this method will become generally applied. That is a first step towards awakening the Europeans to a stronger sense of self-determination and of personal responsibility. They will learn

to value the people's rights higher, and will claim an ever-increasing voice in the management of their own affairs, and no longer rest satisfied to be blindly led, as they are at present, for instance, in all that belongs to external questions. Nothing is more contagious than certain ideas. Formerly we got everything from Europe, but that is all changed. To-day we are almost entirely independent of the old world, and we send to it corn, meat, preserves, and an ever-growing number of other articles, but more important than all that, is that the American political ideas will flood Europe.'

'And do you really think it possible that American ideas about political constitution, for instance, should gain ground in Europe?' asked Madame Baltykoff eagerly.

'In the end surely yes,' answered Mr. Bridgewater.

'There I differ from you,' said my brother, 'for the growing of the imperialistic tendency in the United States, which you have just described as the most important fact of this century's end, is an essentially European and

monarchical feature. As more weight is given to outward expansion and to a strong foreign policy, the people's representatives, who are necessarily chiefly occupied with inner questions, lose in importance. A great imperialistic policy necessitates the rule of great leaders, and there those countries have the advantage where a single man stands at the head of the state.'

'There, you see, Bridgewater,' said Anstruther laughing, 'this stranger predicts us an emperor if we continue on the path of intervention, protection, expansion, warfare, and swallowing of islands.'

'Well, then, let us choose him out of the Club of the Forty,' answered our host, 'for thus shall we feel sure of his being clever.'

'Yes, smart and full of modern ideas Sam I. of America will certainly have to be, otherwise he would be put to shame by some of his European colleagues.'

On our way home my brother and I talked about the impression which one now so often receives here: that the Americans consider us Europeans as pitiably antiquated. After

having taught us modern methods of business, they now also want to supply us with modern principles in general and with all we are lacking in the intellectual domain. Doesn't it sound strange? For after all they got everything from us and are standing on our shoulders. My brother says, that he remembers perfectly well the time when one arrived in America and had for everything a kind of parental goodwill; in those days the Americans eagerly inquired, if one really thought everything 'very big,' and they were so pleased at any praise. Now they are convinced of having by far surpassed us—and I dare say they have.

Well, it must occasionally happen that children outdo their parents—otherwise how could the first genius have come to exist?

LETTER XIII

NEW YORK, *December* 1899.

DEAR FRIEND,—A few days ago we left the Waldorf, which is as expensive as it is delightful, and we have moved into a nice boarding-

house near Central Park, where Madame Baltykoff also lives. Ta of course is with us, and here, as at the Waldorf, he seems to be a source of unbounded amusement to the white-capped housemaids. He is much less reserved with us here than in Peking. We never heard anything about the life of our 'boys.' They were always near at hand when wanted, they did their work noiselessly, and they seemed to have made a study of all our little whims and fads. But the minute they left our houses and stepped out into the streets they were engulfed in an unknown world, and we never heard a word about that part of their lives. Only when they occasionally wanted a longer holiday, we were informed that their father or mother was dying. At first that moved me deeply, I always gave them the holiday, and offered medicines besides. But they really had too many dying fathers and mothers, and such frequent demands were made on my stock of compassion that it at last got exhausted. Here matters are different, Ta is often quite communicative, and he tells me about the housemaids, who like to dress him

up as a lady on account of his long hair, and who have even taken him to one of their balls. Away from China I evidently appear to Ta as 'Father, Mother, and Protector of the poor,' as the natives in India used to say; he looks upon me as the only connecting link between his former and his present life. I believe that since he has seen here so many negroes, he considers white people as almost akin to himself. 'Those are not men, they are black devils,' he said to me quite seriously; and on no account will he admit that they can be Christians like himself. To look down upon others is evidently a subtle satisfaction for human beings of all colours.

Several times Ta has received letters from home. He is always very silent and sad on those days, and I asked him if he felt homesick. He answered, 'Oh no, that he was very happy to be here, but that his old mother had sent him word through others that she wanted him, and that he must come back.' 'Isn't it rather your young wife?' I asked. 'Oh no,' he answered quite indignantly, as if I had accused him of some shameful weakness,

'wife nothing, mother everything.' Now my brother has sent money to the old mother at Peking, and that will appease her, I hope. With Ta's help I have begun unpacking and arranging our rooms a little. It was such a pleasure again to see all the dear well-known things. The jade bowls and bronze vases, the carved ivory figures of Laotse with the long head, the Chinese velvets which with age have acquired quite a Genoese look, the delicate faded damasks and embroideries. As much as possible I have placed and draped everything just as it was in the little Peking house; at dusk, when Ta glides noiselessly into the room, I could almost fancy to be there once more, and I should scarcely wonder if he were to announce you.

I have turned the mantelpiece into a Buddha altar, and all those singular figures stand there which you gradually picked up for me in dilapidated, abandoned temples, or in the most dusty corners of some curio shop. Already before knowing you in Peking, I had the mania for collecting Buddha statues. I had bought several from Chinese dealers, who

had brought them to me, hidden away in their wide sleeves, and who whispered mysteriously that these idols came from imperial temples, and that they ran great risks in bringing them to foreigners. I remember how I first showed you these treasures. For a moment you looked at them critically, and then you said, 'Not bad at all, considering it's modern European imitation.' That was a blow! At first I almost felt vexed with you, for nothing hurts more than to lose beloved idols. And I had treated mine so reverently and had always put fresh flowers before them! But you were soon pardoned, for you replaced the false Buddhas by real ones, and that is more than most people do who deprive others of their gods.

Well, it is not an easy task!

LETTER XIV

NEW YORK, *December* 1899.

DURING the last days, dear friend, I have been quite taken up with the arrangement of our rooms. You know how dependent on my

outward surroundings I am. Mild mellow colours, artistic draperies, finely curved lines, give me a sensation of physical well-being. Perhaps that really great spirits rise above such trifles and do not allow themselves to be disturbed by them, but I am only quite a diminutive spirit, I dread the big sea of commonplace ugliness, and I only rest satisfied when I have succeeded in creating for myself my own tiny island shaped according to my personal taste. I also try to deceive myself about the transitory character of my nomad life, by decorating every new lodging we take with so much eagerness and earnest interest as if it were an old family manor destined to serve for many generations to come—and yet it never is anything but a tent, which we ever anew pull down to put it up in another strange place. In some of the houses in which we have lived I have even gone to the length of painting the doors and ceilings; my brother teased me about it to-day, and asked me if I intended to bestow such a lasting souvenir of our passing stay on this New York boarding-house. I have no such intention, but as soon

as the rooms look comfortable, and a make-believe of home surrounds us, I will take up my painting again. Our drawing-room has an excellent light, so that it can be made to serve as a studio, and as my brother only comes back from down town late in the afternoon, I have the whole day to myself. All my Chinese sketches are here, and I have put up some on the walls, all of them old acquaintances of yours, to which some from Japan and Canada have since been added. As I was turning over all these leaves, the Peking days came back to me so vividly, and particularly the little picture exhibition which I had arranged there just before our departure. '*Premier Salon de Pékin*' it was called, and I sold a lot of sketches. When I thus gain a few hundred dollars with my brush, I feel as proud and self-made as Charles W. O'Doyle in the midst of his millions! In grey, empty days, when the whole world seemed to contain naught for me, I began to paint, first as a distraction and a flight from the ever-recurring, tormenting thoughts. Later on, during the long years of wandering with my brother, it

has gradually become the one great joy of my life, the liberating expression of inward experiences. And in another sense yet painting has become my one great pleasure, for when I sell a picture, it means butter to my daily bread, that is to say the possibility of helping with such little gains others who are less fortunate than I.

You at once took much interest in my painting. How much have you told me about the art and artists of the many countries in which you have lived. How often have you brought me to picturesque spots in grey old Peking which strangers scarce ever are shown, and which, thanks to their perfect originality, contain so many subjects for sketching. When you had thus procured for me the admission to an otherwise always locked-up temple, I eagerly set to work and painted the queer, grimacing idols, or the quaint nooks of tumble-down, bright-tiled roofs, in which doves had built their nests and were cooing softly. Ever present to my memory are those wide, reposeful cloister yards, in which the light plays between the branches of ancient trees and glides over the yellow draperies of some monk, who,

leaning against a huge, patina-covered bronze lion, lets the Buddhistic rosary glide through his fingers, rapt in vague, dreamy visions, hypnotised by the perpetual monotonous murmuring of the same holy, mystical words. All so strange, unfathomable, and separated from us by such infinite distance!

Often, when I was thus painting and trying to render not only the mere lines but the impression of world-remoteness, have I felt your eyes resting on me, and have I become conscious of a new ardour for my work, because of the joy which I saw it was giving you. It seems like an immaterial, spiritual caress to be understood by another in our favourite pursuit and in our deepest, individual tastes. So much withers in us from want of a little interest and kindly tending. We all are like graveyards of things that might have been—and those who have killed and buried most in us are often the so-called nearest and dearest. Thanks, dear friend, to you for all that you have awakened and kindly tended in me, for all the flowers that have bloomed, because they were a joy to you.

LETTER XV

NEW YORK, 25th December 1899.

CHRISTMAS once more has come, dear friend! Christmas, in a country where I had never yet been on this day, where none of the outer surroundings are associated for me with the memory of former Christmas seasons, and where, therefore, a sense of particular forlornness creeps over me, making me shiver as in intense cold. Why have we got this touching, and at the same time somewhat comical, trait of being so particularly attached to some special anniversary days? What do we know about the day of Christ's birth, and what does the day mean for us? And yet, however small a significance it may have to many of us in the wear and tear of life, and, however little we know of peace upon earth, yet it seems to us as if on this day every human being had a special right to rejoice, and we light many little candles, so as to be sure to see joy, if by chance it were to come to us. But we lonely ones, whose lives are spent wandering in distant lands, we seldom

hear Joy knocking at our door on this particular night. Other guests are they that come to us. There is first of all Dame Remembrance, whose picture-book gets thicker every year. Yesterday afternoon, as I had lit up the candles on our tree, and called my brother into the drawing-room, the old dame at once glided in also through the open door. During the whole day I had felt that she stood outside, only waiting for an opportunity to slip in, and during the whole day I had always shut the door in her face—for I am rather frightened of the old dame with her big picture-book. But now she stood there right between us. I think it must have been Ta, who was also called to receive his present, who had let her in!

Oh! how the leaves of the big picture-book rustled and crackled! They became alive with voices long mute! Forgotten laughs, hushed-up sobs and sighs sounded afresh! Things that once have been filled the room and heaved about us; tiny grey ghosts sat on the branches of the Christmas tree in the flickering candlelight, and they murmured softly of all

that is no more; but also that which has never been, which has only been hoped and longed for—for this one brief evening it arose again.

I tarried longest over the last pages of the picture-book. The Christmas Eves at Peking stood once more before my eyes. Do you also think of them to-day? Do you remember? Do you remember the year when young M'Intyre was ill, and we brought him a wee bit of a tree? I sat in the sedan chair, and held the tiny, gaily-decorated tree on my lap, and you walked by my side, and repeated to the coolies to carry me carefully over the rough, hard-frozen road. How pleased the poor boy looked when we entered his room, and put our glistening little tree on the table, between the photographs of his parents and brothers, who were far away in Scotland, and whose pictures he had wanted quite close by his bed on that day!

And do you remember the Christmas trees in our little Chinese house, to which you and some of my brother's friends always came. Days before great excitement prevailed, to

find some special surprise for everybody at the curio dealers, and later on, when the railroad existed, venturesome people went to Tientsin to see what the foreign shops there might possibly contain.

But you, dear friend, always discovered the prettiest things! Before me, as I am writing to you, there stands the old French bronze clock, which must have come to China in the time of the *Directoire*, and which you presented to me as a Christmas gift. The pedestal is still completely carried out in the style of Louis XVI., ornamented with dolphins and graceful garlands. From it four dragons arise, who carry the clock; curious creatures they are, in whom the French artist tried to embody his own conception of the Chinese. Above the clock there stands on a celestial globe a small Gallic cock crowing for liberty, but making such a sceptical face, as if he had lost all belief in it long ago.

When you gave me this clock you said, 'It is so well suited to you.' On a basis of old inherited taste, transmitted through many generations, the dragons rise, representing the

tendency towards the incomprehensible and mystical which awakens in us as we see that exact, reasonable realism does not explain anything, and that everything always ends again with a big sign of interrogation ; and as a crowning to the whole edifice, the brave little cock, who calls for liberty *quand même*, who has seen many dull, grey days, and who seems to say that, after all this crowing, the sun might really rise.

Yes, all that and so many more things are marked on the last pages of the great picture-book !

My brother and I were sitting under the Christmas tree in the New York boarding-house room ; with folded hands we were gazing back on life, thinking of past times. Neither of us spoke. One after the other, Ta put out the little candles that had burned down—just as on other Christmas Eves. Sometimes a small green fir-branch caught fire. We heard it crackle in the deep silence ; it glowed up an instant, and a resinous smell floated through the room, reminding us of distant snow-covered forests—yes, just as on all Christmas Eves.

LETTER XVI

NEW YORK, 26th December 1899.

I WAS interrupted yesterday, and had to leave off my letter without being able to describe to you the whole of our Christmas Eve, for it did not end at our own rooms. We were invited to a Christmas tree at the house of the German Consul. Laden with parcels containing presents for the children, we went there by the Elevated Railway.

After repeated, ineffectual ringing at the street-door, the Consul himself opened, and let us in, explaining that 'Tom was laying the table.' Then he conducted us into his little study, where we met several countrymen, amongst them the Consul-General, with his loud, jolly, catching laughter. The Consul has been appointed to New York since a few months, and his wife, with her two small children, have only joined him here a few days ago, coming from their home in the Black Forest. It is a touching German trait that, scarcely settled themselves, they still have invited for this great *fête* some countrymen

who otherwise would probably have been left to spend Christmas Eve in *tête-à-tête* with home-sickness.

‘My wife is arranging the tree,’ said the Consul. But there she came in, very young, with exceedingly fair hair coiled in plain plaits around her head, astonished blue eyes, her face rosily flushed. On her arm she carried a chubby one-year-old boy, who had the same astonished blue eyes, and by her side trotted a three-year-old little girl, who gravely carried a bell.

‘Everything is ready,’ she called to us. ‘Now, Evchen, ring the bell!’

And Evchen rang the bell, and we all followed into the drawing-room, where the tree glistened with the light of many candles. It was decorated with bright chains, nuts, apples, and gingerbreads, surely an exact reproduction of the Christmas trees which the Consul’s wife had seen since childhood at her mother’s and grandmother’s house in the far-off little town of the Black Forest. It all felt very homelike. One forgot the hurrying, new town outside, and seemed to be carried back

into an old world, where change is so slow that it really seems to stand still.

The baby had been established on the carpet, and a long, foldable picture-book of untearable paper was put up all around him, whilst we helped the *Frau Consulin* to empty the box which had arrived from her mother. How carefully it all was packed, every single thing wrapped many times in tissue paper, tied up with a blue ribbon. To each parcel a piece of paper was pinned, on which a few kind words for the receiver had been shakily traced by a trembling old hand. The box was filled with things, all of which one can get just as well at New York. So very unpractical and so essentially German! Home-knitted and home-embroidered clothing articles for the children, home-made cakes and sausages made out of the pig that had been killed for Christmas, and quite at the bottom of the box some heavy, learned-looking books for the Consul, and a large photograph of Boecklin's picture of a monk who plays the fiddle whilst small angels listen to him. 'Dear old Germany,' said pensively one of the guests who had

helped to unpack, 'if only thy space were as large as thy *Gemüth*, so that all thy far-scattered children could find room by thee.'

Evchen had been gazing in silent rapture at the photograph. Now she ran to the window, and pressed her little nose flat against the glass panes.

'What are you doing there?' I asked her.

'I'm looking to see if there are also little angels flying out there,' she answered; and added, rather disappointed, 'No, here there aren't any at all.'

With the child, I looked out on the many uniform houses of the street, at whose end was a station of the Elevated Railway. A brilliantly lit train came rushing along through darkness, stopped a minute, and then sped off again.

'The railway trains don't like it here,' said Evchen. 'They make such haste to get here, but then they always hurry away again as fast as they can.'

'Dear child,' the Consul addressed his wife, 'shall we not soon get something to eat?'

She started up from amongst all the home

parcels. '*Aber ja*, surely everything must be ready long ago.'

She rang the bell, but cause and effect did not follow one another. Then she went out, but soon came back with a startled face, and we heard her whispering to her husband, 'I think you had better go and talk to him.'

Then the Consul went out, and we soon heard a short altercation in raised voices, and then something heavy seemed to roll down the stairs. The Consul came in again, somewhat flushed and breathless. 'Ladies and gentlemen, I beg your pardon—it was merely one of those small domestic incidents which make housekeeping in the United States an occupation so full of varied emotions—the negro, Tom, was very tipsy—I found him playing ball with the Edam cheese—then I inverted the parts, and played ball a little with him—and during that game he just rolled down the staircase and into the street.'

'And when I went out before,' added the *Frau Consul* plaintively, 'he was eating the oysters we were to have had for supper, and he explained to me that he was only choosing

the bad ones, so that we should not get poisoned.'

The Consul-General laughed in his most sonorous, hearty fashion, and we all joined in. And then followed a Christmas supper, which at least had the charm of unconventional novelty, for it was discovered that the Irish cook had left with the black Tom. We all went down to the kitchen with the Consul's wife, and saved what yet could be saved; we carried the dishes into the dining-room, and did also full justice to the sausages which had been sent with such wise foresight in the Christmas-box from Germany.

As we said good-bye, our hostess remarked apologetically, 'You all must forgive us—but you see things here are rather different from the Black Forest.'

LETTER XVII

NEW YORK, *1st January* 1900.

DEAR FRIEND,—May the New Year shower on you all* the good things with which I wish you may be blessed! My first thoughts this

morning flew out across the roaring winter seas and the wide, hard frozen plains over which the storm moans to search for you. But they could not find you, and now they roam on aimlessly, longing to discover where you are and to bring you a greeting. I wish I could fill your life with all that is beautiful and happy ; but with all my wishing I could not light for you a little tree on Christmas Eve, and now on New Year's Day I cannot even stretch out my hands to you. Ever since this morning I fancied that this day surely could not pass without a word from you coming to me ; it seemed as if I must hear your voice quite softly in the distance, as in those long gone days when you once said : ' And if it may not be happiness, then let it at least be what is next best ! ' And what you called ' next best ' was so much richer and tenderer, so much more filled with kindness and care than all what others are able to offer as highest happiness, that I am afraid you have spoilt me very much, so that I now feel quite forlorn.

But lest this letter might do you harm and make you a prey to the ever-lurking little

evil spirit of vanity, I will quickly add that I always suffer more or less from the great home-sickness for the past, more so now perhaps when I feel transplanted from that far eastern town where I had got rooted in such utterly different surroundings. He who once knows and loves the East is no longer adapted to the western world. One cannot help wondering at it, and reason forces us to recognise the fact that the coming century will belong to the West, but we never more can feel quite at home in it, and there remains a consciousness of inner estrangement. How did Kipling, that great Oriental, ever get reconciled to the West? I understand so entirely the home-sickness for the East which trembles through all his works, like a *leit-motiv* of yearning, incomprehensible to those whose best years have not been spent beyond Suez.

I thought so much to-day of English officials whom I had known years ago in India, and whom I later on met again in some little town in England, pensioned off and aged. In India they had often grumbled about the climate, the

natives, and the rate of exchange, but, notwithstanding all their complaints, they always felt like gods, even if it were only like eighth-quarter or demigods, and, without their knowing it, the years spent out there had been their happiest time. One mostly is happy without knowing it, and we realise that we were happy by ceasing to be so. In Bath or Torquay, under grey skies, in narrow rooms, with an awkward Mary Ann, against whom just exasperation never dare find vent in a volley of expressive Hindustani blessings, surrounded by people who know nothing of the godlikeness which belongs to every sahib in the towns that end in 'abad' and 'pore'; yes, there those poor dethroned ones first fully realised how beautiful life once had been, and the great home-sickness for the East crept into their hearts and settled there.

Here I often feel like one of those pensioned-off English officials, or like a poor little banished queen, of whom nobody notices that she once upon a time wore a small golden crown. When I try to squeeze through the crowd in the streets, where nobody recognises

me, I sometimes say to myself, that if I fell down dead, I should be carried into a cold, grey morgue, and nobody would know who I was; and then I long for that distant town, where every one knew me, and where, when I left, they all stood at the station waving their handkerchiefs to me.

It seems to me as if the consciousness of our own smallness and unimportance rested like a heavy weight, not only on poor little wanderers like myself, but on most modern people. We suffer from our own diminutiveness and from the narrow limits of our life and knowledge since the endlessness of space and time have been taught to us. People of former epochs cannot have known this contrast between human smallness and the world's infinity; they must have been more contented, because they fancied they were made in the right proportion to everything else. Those people who lived in old houses with high gables, and also those people who nowadays remain quietly in small centres, where everybody knows everybody else, and where the belief in one's own importance never is shaken,

to me seem enviable beings, for there is nothing more satisfactory than to be able to believe in oneself. In such small communities also flourishes that highest blossom of the conviction of personal importance; the belief in an eternal individual continuance. For it seems utterly impossible that Mr. A., with whom we have played at ninepins every Saturday for thirty years, or that Mrs. B., with whom we have lived in rivalry ever since school, should suddenly be entirely wiped out, as if they had never been. That cannot happen to such important people. They are only invisible for a time and have started on that long journey which we all must once undertake; but afterwards we shall of course meet them again.

But he who has been thrown by the waves on countless strange shores, he who has seen that everywhere, and since times infinite, millions and millions are born and buried without leaving by their coming and going more trace than the swarms of insects which, for a moment, glide through the rays of the sun; he loses the belief in the importance of

all transitory phases, and he doubts the inner necessity of an eternal continuance for all those ephemeral, antlike existences which in endless, unchanging repetitions ever arise anew to disappear again. And when we then finally reach the conviction that we also are just one in the swarm of human day-flies, then we long for comfort, were it even through fiction, and we yearningly remember those who, by their friendship and tenderness, gave us for a while the illusion, as if we were, after all, quite important little flies, whose welfare was a matter of great consequence to another being.

And because I realise all this to-day so very deeply here in a strange land, where nobody cares how poor little banished queens begin the New Year, therefore I feel homesick for—well, let us say for Peking!

LETTER XVIII

NEW YORK, *January* 1900.

A COLD grey day, far too dark for painting.
A general feeling of listlessness and of dis-

comfort. The book which one has been reading by the fireside seems dull. The view out of the window bores one just as much. Those people almost seem enviable who say self-complacently, 'I have never yet felt bored,' and who thus give the measure of their own appalling dulness if they really are not capable of noticing how tiresome is most of that with which life is filled.

I wish!—what do I wish?—I wish I were going with you on a strange and perilous expedition into some marvellous country, if possible into an unexplored star. But now, please, don't rush straight away into vain deductions. For that you are not vain is just one of your nice qualities, and every true woman must find a vain man horrid, for he encroaches on her domain. And besides, the only reason for my choosing you as a travelling companion in the unexplored star is that Livingstone, who certainly would have proved very useful there, is dead already.

But truly and in earnest, I have sometimes such a burning longing to be and to

achieve something. I often feel as if I consisted of nothing but unused capacities, and as if all opportunities to give one's measure, which ought to be mine, passed by me and went to others, who in their turn don't know what to make of them. For humanity is divided into people of whom never is asked nearly that which they could easily achieve; and into others, on whom demands are made to which they are not equal in the least—the latter being the happier, for a part of their incapacity consists in their never noticing how incapable they are.

The outcome of this arrangement is that nobody stands where he ought to. When some one suddenly is called to a responsible post, we congratulate him and say: 'At last the right man in the right place,' and meanwhile we think, 'What a mess he'll make of it.' And generally we are right in this latter supposition.

That reminds me of the little boy whom his mother scolded because he was playing with wet earth: 'Oh, Georgie, what a mess you're making!'

The child answered : 'I'm only playing at government, mother.'

'How so, Georgie?'

'Well, father said government was making a mess of everything.'

And a great mess of the world's government it evidently is, that I sit here, looking alternately into the chimney and out on the street, and that everything else which I could do besides would be equally useless.

It seems to me as if so many women always sit about, waiting for the door to open and some one to come in.

LETTER XIX

NEW YORK, *January* 1900.

I WAS interrupted yesterday, otherwise I don't know how long I should have gone on writing grey-in-grey meditations to you about the world's general mismanagement. Therefore be thankful that yesterday the door really did open and Madame Baltykoff came in with a little sable toque on her head, which suited her as naturally as the shining fur does a cat.

‘Why, how enviably unoccupied you look,’ said Madame Baltykoff; ‘and I am so worn out with everything which I must see and where I must be seen. In no country of the world have I heard so much about social duties as here: it’s almost as if they were to make up for all others. To-day a New York lady took me in tow and we went to a lunch, an exhibition, a charity sale, and three at-homes. Every time, when I was just overcoming the inevitable stiff dulness of arrival and beginning to enjoy myself a little, my social pilot made desperate signals at me to start afresh, because there remained so many more places at which we had to be seen. I felt at last like a criminal hurrying about to try and provide himself with an alibi. And now I have yet another call to make on a former countrywoman of mine, and there I want you to accompany me. Besides it is not good for you at all to be brooding like a feminine Oblomoff.’

And as all my desire for activity has always ended by my letting myself drift at the will of outward powers, I went out with Madame

Baltykoff into the cold, grey wintry world and made the acquaintance of Miss Tatiana de Gribojedoff.

Yes, dear friend, she is really called so, even if you read the name three times over, and the 'Miss' also has a right to be.

Tatiana's father of course was a Russian, but her mother was the daughter of Mr. Carmichael from Illinois, who was American Consul in Archangel, and in that cold corner of the world little Tatiana's cradle stood. Madame de Gribojedoff, *née* Carmichael, does not seem ever to have felt at home there, which I for my part do not blame her for. She endeavoured with success to bring up Tatiana in an attitude distinctly critical and disdainful towards all things Russian, and to inculcate in her an unquestioning admiration for all that is Anglo - Saxon. When Tatiana's father died, leaving them a large fortune, the two ladies emigrated back to America, and since her mother's death, Tatiana lives in New York as an independent spinster.

Her little house is stuffed with all those things which wary travellers carefully avoid

buying on their journeys. From the Niagara Falls she has brought back Indian mocassins, manufactured for export by utterly un-Indian hands: they are hung up on a wall close to a Spanish fan, on which a bull-fight is depicted. In Mexico she has bought fruits carved in Puebla marble, pink peaches, green mangoes, brown figs: they rest on a bracket together with large glistening shells, and specimens of different corals, the outcome of an excursion to Havannah. From Sorrento Miss Tatiana has brought back little bookshelves made of olivewood, and on them stand, next to Roman mosaic boxes and a diminutive reproduction of the Vesta Temple, a whole collection of glasses from different watering-places, a course of whose mineral springs treatment Miss Tatiana has gone through. All kinds of inscriptions are engraved on these glasses: 'Zur freundlichen Erinnerung an Schlangenbad,' 'Wohl bekomm's'; on one goblet is photographed a view of the Trinkhalle at Baden-Baden. Perhaps it is owing to the great amount of health-improving liquids which Miss Tatiana has absorbed that she is so painfully thin.

She was seated on one side of the chimney, and opposite to her sat a small, fat, elderly gentleman, whom Madame Baltykoff greeted as Ivan Ivanovitch, and who was introduced to me as Mr. Bashmakoff. The hostess and her guest were evidently just having a political debate, for she looked excited, and as soon as we were seated she went on saying: 'Truly, Mr. Bashmakoff, every day when I read of the persecution and oppression to which the poor Finlanders are subjected, I am thankful that I emigrated and became a free citizen of the United States.'

'But, dear Tatiana Feodorovna,' answered the small fat man, 'nothing would have happened to you in Russia, for you aren't at all a Finlander that I know of.'

'That is a cowardly subterfuge. In such a case one must always identify oneself with the persecuted. As I cannot help all the wrong which is being committed in Russia, I have at least protested openly against it by leaving the country. I would no longer countenance tyranny.'

'Always the same, always the same fire in

our dear Tatiana Feodorovna,' sighed the old man.

'And with you always the same provoking way of calling me at least once in every sentence by that silly Russian appellation—Tatiana Feodorovna!'

Mr. Bashmakoff pressed his hand on the protruding region of his body where somewhere behind all that fat the heart is supposed to be, and he answered: 'It is because during a lifetime it has been the sweetest name in the world to me.'

The old lady seemed somewhat mollified by this speech, and turned to me: 'You will agree with me that it is hard, considering my views as a free American, to be burdened with such a name as Tatiana de Gribojedoff.'

'Don't forget, dear Tatiana Feodorovna, how often I have asked you to change that name,' said the small, fat man, again pressing his hand on his heart.

The old lady laughed aloud: 'No, really, Gribojedoff or Bashmakoff—there isn't much to choose from! Oh, if you had been called Washington or Lincoln, or even if you could

boast of a plain Anglo-Saxon Brown or Smith, I might have taken the matter into consideration—but as it is . . .’ and she shrugged her shoulders, and both laughed about this joke, which is renewed every time that Mr. Bashmakoff comes from Archangel on a yearly trip to New York to visit the love of his early youth in the land of her choice.

‘The Philippines cause me much anxiety,’ said the Russian-American, pointing with a responsibility-laden mien to some newspapers lying beside her: ‘it is evidently necessary to send fresh troops out there. I only hope that the State Department is prepared to act with the utmost energy in the suppression of the insurgents. I have no doubt that foreign intrigues are at work there, got up against us by those to whom it is an abomination to see us getting a foothold in the enslaved East; if it were not for such underhand dealings those poor, benighted people would long ago have recognised that we bring to them the light of freedom.’

‘Perhaps they object to the land-grabbing which seems to be a part inherent of the process

of civilising and enlightening,' said Madame Baltykoff, musingly.

'Or, may be, your Western methods are not well appreciated and understood in the East, dear Tatiana Feodorovna; perhaps they are not even well suited for that part of the world,' Mr. Bashmakoff objected meekly.

'Liberty and right are well suited everywhere, but you Russians always fancy that you alone understand the East. I gladly acknowledge that you are more akin to those people than we, but why should they be conducted by the roundabout way of Knout, Siberia, and Orthodoxy to final freedom and true faith?'

'And pray what is the true faith?' asked Madame Baltykoff.

'The true faith?' Miss Tatiana stopped short a moment, but then she answered with quick resolution: 'The true faith is what we Anglo-Saxons believe.'

'Indeed,' said Madame Baltykoff, and then continued musingly, as if she were pondering over some difficult arithmetical problem: 'Methodists and Baptists, Congregationalists and Christian Scientists, United Brethren and

Disciples of Christ, Latter Day Saints, Quakers and Shakers—not to forget the Mormons—they all then have the true faith?’

Miss Tatiana treated us still for some time to the animated discussion of several political questions. The patient Bashmakoff had to listen to many severe accusations against Russia, and she gave him to understand that whoever is not of Anglo-Saxon lineage can have but cunning schemes and mean self-interest for motives of all his actions.

If Madame Baltykoff sometimes appears as a personified sign of interrogation, I have met in the person of Miss Tatiana a living assertion. She reminds me of the wife of a great landed proprietor in Pomerania whom I heard years ago abusing direct taxes. In my youth and ignorance of those days I asked her what they were, and I received the prompt answer: ‘Direct taxes are those which we must pay ourselves, indirect taxes those which other people pay, therefore the first are bad and the latter are good.’

Miss Tatiana also possesses this gift of graphic definition and of unhesitating deduction.

LETTER XX

NEW YORK, *January* 1900.

THIS afternoon I went out to call on our Consul's wife. I took the Elevated, for she lives far out in one of the streets with the very high numbers, that always remind me of newly formed regiments drawn up on the frontier. The houses all look so much alike that one could mistake each one for any one of the others, and in this probably their military character consists, for I remember how a young relative, newly transformed into a full-fledged lieutenant, once said to me enthusiastically: 'Absolute uniformity is the ultimate object, and the obliteration of individuality is the first step towards it.'

As I did not find the *Frau Consul* at home, I went for an exploration tour on my own hook, which I always find much more interesting than when patriotic New-Yorkers take me about sight-seeing, and expect much enthusiasm for some towerlike building, in which somewhere near the clouds a paper is printed, corn is sold or money changed.

Although of course, as a result of the rising prices of land, this increasing tendency to reach heaven with our earthly abodes must certainly be highly gratifying to those people who believe that all hardships are inflicted on us for the ultimate end of leading us heavenward.

I walked very far and passed the last streets. Further out there are places which look as if you were in the Far West. Wide, empty plots of land, with the most astonishing little dwellings scattered about: tents stitched together out of all kinds of rags and tatters, holes dug into earth like the caverns of prehistoric cave-dwellers, and next to them low hovels made of a patchwork of boards, lids of boxes, rusty pieces from some iron-plated roof, and sides of kerosene tin boxes, all nailed together. A whole population of undefined professions lives there and treks further out as the streets with the high numbers advance. Perhaps such an odd hut figures on the first page in the book of remembrance of some of the present millionaires! Such wonderful turns of the wheel

are known to those people who to-day are still forced to camp in the eccentric quarters of utter misery, and it helps them to bear their lot more easily, for they look upon it as a transitory condition, and they remember the examples of those who have worked their way. That is what renders poverty in the new countries less depressing: even the poorest sees the possibility of the financial marshal's baton before him. That is the very reason why they come from over the great waters, to leave the old hopelessness and resignation behind!

But to-day it seemed infinitely melancholy to me out there, and great must have been the optimism that could remember the possibility of any marshal's baton. An icy wind was blowing over the open land. Laden with cold it came sweeping from the direction of the great North American lakes, driving everything before its freezing blast, and tearing ruthlessly through all the cracks and fissures in those quaint and pitiable abodes of misery. I wonder if the inhabitants of those shaky, rattling, storm-beaten huts were

also of opinion that the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb? When you wear a seal-skin jacket, such a comfortable belief always seems indisputable.

During my walk to-day, I thought much of similar winter days spent at Peking, and I remembered particularly a ride which we took there just a year ago. It was quite as cold as it is here to-day. The wind came howling from the Mongol-Siberian plains, so icy and biting as if spring could never more return. The road stretched on endlessly before us along the high, gloomy town-wall. The towers with their projecting roofs of dilapidated green tiles loomed threatening against the lurid winter sky. In some spots lay hard frozen snow. Crows flew croaking before the gusts of wind.

As so often in Peking, I had on that particular day the impression as if the whole world were paralysed with fear, and waiting breathlessly for something unknown and sinister. Town of suffering, town of doom have I often called Peking—and yet, I believe I love the grey, dismal city. Often have I the

distinct feeling of belonging to it, as if that world held me for ever, however far I am separated from it by space.

I fear I am getting like all people who have lived in Peking, and who afterwards never can leave off writing or talking about it.

That is the revenge which China takes on the white people, because they nearly all only go there to wrest from it a piece of land or some other advantage—finally it is *they* who are absorbed by China.

Don't let yourself be absorbed too much, dear friend !

LETTER XXI

NEW YORK, *February* 1900.

DEAR FRIEND,—My last wandering in wintry New York has agreed very badly with me. I have been ill ever since with fever and a cough. Coughs and fevers are already, since many years, the milestones standing along my life's road. Finally such a milestone will turn into a little cross. And where after that the road leads to, or whether there is any road at all—that nobody knows.

WHICH NEVER REACHED HIM III

But I am already a little better now. I am lying on a couch near the chimney. The white Thibetan goatskin rug, which you know, is spread over me. Ta goes about with a troubled face. I don't know if he is distressed on my account, or because of the many letters he has lately received from home.

Yesterday my brother gave me some branches of white hothouse lilac. Carefully wrapt in tissue paper he brought them in — such poor, wintry lilac! All the little blossoms seemed to shiver and to wonder why they had been forced to hurry so much to get into this unfriendly world. Now the brown stalks on which the slender white flower grapes hang, stand in a slim greenish bronze vase beside me. The flowers have recovered a little, as if they were grateful to have after all found a tolerable abode. A faint smell of lilac, which almost seems artificial, rises from them and steals through the room.

That perfume wakens slumbering memories, for lilac is a humble plant which manages to grow in the most different countries, and it reminds me of many times and places.

At Garzin, the estate near Berlin on which I grew up, the lilacs were in flower in May. Four large bushes stood on the grass plot in front of the *Schloss*, and in their midst there was an old sun-dial. Every spring when the lilac bloomed, the same old invalid came hobbling along on a wooden leg; he took up his position in the courtyard and played on his barrel-organ 'The Last Rose of Summer,' or 'Long, Long Ago.' I don't know where he remained during winter, but in all my earliest spring recollections I can see the invalid standing there with his barrel-organ, and the lilac perfume fills the air, and we children search for five-leaved lilac blossoms—for they were to bring good-luck just like four-leaved clover. Once I presented a five-petalled flower to the old organ-grinder, but he did not seem to believe that one leaf more or less mattered much; perhaps he had acquired that way of looking at things in the time when he learnt to do with but one leg.

And of many other times and places the faint smell reminds me!

Even in flower-barren Peking we had lilac. In the gardens of all the legations stood many bushes. In April they were in full bloom all at the same time, blossoming forth overnight as by magic. All drawing-rooms and all dining-tables were then filled with the same white and purple glory and profusion. But scarce a fortnight did the flowery enchantment last. That was the only time of year when Peking smelt nice.

In the days of the lilacs bloom, Sir Robert Hart gave regularly one of his garden parties. His Chinese bandsmen, who wore uniforms, and of whom he was so intensely proud, played the European tunes which a Portuguese bandmaster from Macao had taught them. And with the strain of all the well-known tunes, which were only occasionally and involuntarily altered a little, there floated through the garden the old home smell of lilac. The *société de Pékin* walked up and down the few avenues and exhibited Tientai's newest and smartest creations; they went in pairs, following the natural bent of their inclination, or they grouped themselves according to the

momentary political constellation. For politics are a seasoning which in Peking is mixed freely into everything. At the end of these social gatherings a set of lancers was always danced on the small uneven grass plot. Every time the fiction was kept up that these lancers were the spontaneous expression of an irrepressibly buoyant mood—but they had always formed part of the programme beforehand.

All that was entirely stereotyped—for all things in China have a tendency to grow stereotyped.

So-called pleasures in remote places always seem infinitely melancholy to me. They are such an evident attempt at self-deception, for which so much goodwill is required. Small, pitiable exertions to try to forget where one is and all that is lacking. The firmly taken and earnestly carried out resolution also to be for once 'fashionable society.' Deep sadness has often oppressed me in the midst of such artificially transplanted and cultivated amusements—they remind me of stunted white winter-lilac. That also is not the real thing.

LETTER XXII

NEW YORK, *February* 1900.

I AM still far from well, but I want to write a little to you, so as to give myself the illusion of your being here and my chatting to you.

When I am ill I always feel so sorry for myself; I should then like to take myself in my own arms to pet and comfort my own self. Good health helps us so much to deceive ourselves about many things; we feel equal to anything and are therefore satisfied with ourselves, and as soon as we can manage that, all else is right as well. But when you are often ill, and the balance between what you can do and what you ought to do always shows a deficit on your side, then the whole world ends by appearing like an arithmetical puzzle in which there is always something wrong. But don't gather from this that I am particularly lonely. The small corner of the world which from this couch lies within my eye-range is probably neither worse nor more dull than all the rest. A number of people come to see me, and of all newly-made friends, Madame Baltykoff is here

most, and by a secret law of mysterious attraction, Mr. Anstruther invariably drops in shortly after her.

I also have books, and then there are the American newspapers, in which not only news of general interest is recorded, but which give such a wonderful chronicle of the everyday life of all one's neighbours, who in any way have a claim to this much sought for conspicuousness.

The publicity of private life in America is ever a fresh source of astonishment to us foreigners. It extends to the smallest actions of the upper four hundred. The social *début* of a young lady of that class of society is announced beforehand with descriptions of her personal appearance and of the gowns she has ordered in Paris; we are informed about the money she can afford to spend on dress, the number of her gloves, her favourite flower, and her special 'flirts.' When she gets married, columns are devoted to the description of her trousseau and her wedding presents, and exact calculations are made as to her *fiancé's* worth (in dollars). A New York lady really never

is alone ; she constantly acts before reporters, who transmit to an eager crowd the important knowledge of all details of her life. The consciousness of being constantly observed, talked and written about, may have contributed to the American women of the upper class never forgetting for a moment the impression they create. They always are bent on pleasing, and they never rest before every one who approaches them is subjugated by their spell. They are always amiable, charming, and fascinating, but to healthy people from other countries, these frail, nervous, and bloodless beings appear at times somewhat like unnatural apparitions. They live principally on admiration ; besides that, on ice-water and dainty small dishes at which they peck and nibble a little. The beefsteak side of life is an abomination to them ; they would like best to abolish all that is physical, they call it coarse and unworthy of higher beings, and they fancy that because they ignore it, it is done away with and relegated into lower spheres of society. Thanks to this personal lack of temperament, and because they are accustomed to the American

men, who generally seem overworked and preoccupied, and who age fast, the American ladies can indulge freely and go so far in their favourite pastime of flirting. An enamoured European, who would draw European deductions, would err greatly; he would probably be told that he was no gentleman and did not respect women.

In the midst of this artificial existence the worship carried on with children strikes one as strange. It is quite a characteristic trait of this society. Perhaps that it dates back to those times, when there were so few inhabitants for the enormous country that every little new comer caused great joy as one more American citizen. Perhaps it is, on the contrary, an ultra-modern feeling, for of late the number of children born diminishes steadily in the most fashionable and smartest sets in New York, so that each baby is possibly looked upon as an achievement little short of miraculous. The fair New Yorkers take small trouble to perpetuate their own beauty in a future generation.

The weight accorded to the judgment of

women on all intellectual matters is also a very striking feature. Literary and artistic renown is made by them; whoever wants to get on must paint, write, or play, so as to please the leading ladies. Mostly they are far superior to their money-making husbands in all questions of *esprit*, and nobody is more aware of it than they themselves, but I don't believe that they suffer from this knowledge; it seems to them to correspond to the wise ordainment of things, and they consider as becoming and full of mysterious charm, the mental attitude of a highly cultivated, most delicately refined woman whose somewhat more roughly shaped husband fails to understand her in her most subtle, butterfly-winged thoughts and aspirations. Enchanting, diaphanous creatures they are, supplied for every hour of the day with different bewitching garments, and they manage to hide successfully before their own eyes the great uselessness of their existence by an imperturbable belief in the importance of the thousand little pursuits which they carry on in a perpetual hurry.

But this is only one very special type which

we strangers perhaps come to know so quickly, because these ladies have no positive occupation with duties brooking of no delay, and because, with all their seeming business and hurry, they only try to find new objects with which to fill the hours. A traveller always knows least about the real professional workers of a strange country, for they have no time to spare for him—and how many truly eager and working women must there be in this nation of seventy-five millions!

LETTER XXIII

NEW YORK, *March* 1900.

YOU will never guess, dear friend, who came to see me to-day!

Father Hofer! But a Hofer quite un-Chinese, grown completely Roman Catholic in his outward appearance. I had seen him last a year and a half ago at Pei-ta-ho, where he was on a visit to his minister. Like all Catholic priests in China, he then wore a pigtail, of scanty nature, and Chinese clothes. On account of the great heat they were made of thin white

pongee, and he always looked so immaculate that I once told him that his exterior was like the lilies of the fields; but as to spinning and toiling, he did not leave matters to God, but followed in that respect Martha's example more than Mary's. To-day, in the retrogressive transformation of an ordinary black priest dress, I scarcely recognised him at first. But otherwise he was quite as of old, jolly, energetic, and full of sound common-sense. I cannot tell you how happy I was to meet some one coming straight from Peking. I believe I was as delighted as Ta, who made Kotowlike salutations to the Father, beaming all over his sallow round face at being able to talk Chinese once more.

Naturally I asked Hofer at once about you, but he told me that from what he had heard in Peking, he thought you would only be back from your great exploration in June. So it will yet be many a week before I can hear from you, and during all that time my letters, which I always write with the illusion of immediately reaching you, will be waiting for you at Shanghai.

The Father told me about all friends at Peking, and although he only goes there from his province every few years, yet he knows its ins and outs as if he held the thread of all its big and small intrigues in his hands. He is an example how wonderfully well informed the members of the high Catholic clergy are; they outdo by far all those governmental news and gossip collectors called diplomats.

After the priest had told me about the last events in the *société de Pékin*, I asked him the object of his present journey. He answered, that he is on his way to Europe to call attention to the fact that in China serious events are brewing. He told me that since several months disturbances are going on in his province, and that they are fomented by secret societies bearing a markedly anti-foreign character. 'We are accustomed to that,' he said, 'but what causes me serious uneasiness is the fact that the rioters are openly countenanced by the provincial mandarins, who in their turn seem to rely on the protection of the highest authorities in Peking. Missionaries and native Christians have been assaulted without its

being possible to obtain the punishment of the evil-doers, and all high officials lately appointed are noted for their hate of Christians and their relations with the secret societies. The reason is that in Peking the fear of the Lord no longer reigns, which, specially with Orientals, is the beginning of all wisdom. We missionaries in the interior are always the first to notice the consequences of such a change of attitude, we also hear much that is spoken too softly for other ears, and throughout China the word is being passed "that the foreign devils need no longer be feared, because their hour has come." Favier believes, just as I do, in a great approaching uprising, for he has been warned like myself by his native converts. The leaders of the Society of the Great Knife announce their programme quite openly: "First the native Christians, then the foreigners." I brought information of all this to the proper place at Peking, but there I was given to understand that we missionaries had been spoilt by too much protection and had thus grown overbearing, whilst we formerly had looked upon

persecution as the inevitable accompaniment of all missionary work, without clamouring perpetually for help from men-of-war and punitive expeditions. Upon this I left Peking with a last warning: the danger, I said, does not concern this time the missionaries more than all other foreigners—perhaps that you here in Peking will soon fare even worse than we in our provinces.'

I could scarcely believe what Father Hofer told me. I reminded him of the perfect carelessness and safety with which all strangers used to live not only in Peking itself, but also during summer in the lonely temples scattered about the hills.

'How could all that change so quickly?' I asked him.

'Many causes acted together,' he answered. 'Since some years there are famines in several provinces, and such intense misery is prevailing there as is absolutely unknown in Europe. Many workmen also fear that their small livelihoods will be threatened by the building of railways and the steam-navigation on the rivers, of which they have heard vague rumours as

of monstrous innovations. News of outward events travel slowly in China, and I remember to have spoken in 1897 with mandarins and priests from the neighbourhood of Jehol who knew nothing as yet of the war with Japan, but however slowly, still the news of the last European annexations have finally spread throughout wider circles, and they have excited humiliation and bitterness. Those newly acquired foreign possessions, in which the art of government is practised according to European bureaucratic routine, have in their turn become centres of anti-foreign feeling, for so very often the little ways and means by which Chinese susceptibilities could have been spared were completely and arrogantly set aside. The growing dissatisfaction turned at first against the weak and rotten Government which had allowed the foreign encroachments, and which proved more helpless before every new aggression. Then it seemed for a short time as if a general awakening of China were really near at hand, for a reform party had sprung up and was fast spreading, having enlisted the young Emperor's sympathies.'

‘I remember that,’ said I; ‘but don’t you think that those young men were entirely unpractical and unfit for any responsible post?’

‘Well, yes,’ answered Hofer, ‘they did have a great many vague, unpractical notions, and they would have blundered like most men when first starting in the ruling business, but they also had some clear and noble aims. Old abuses were to be abolished with almost feverish eagerness, and means were sought for putting China again on a footing that would inspire respect to the world, for the reformers had a keen sense of dignity, and resented the way in which China had been treated, which is the treatment ever reserved for those who know not how to defend what they possess. If the movement had been allowed to continue, great results might have been achieved. It was one of those sudden, and, perhaps, last chances which fate sometimes holds out to a people; civilisation, innovations, perhaps even Christianity, hung in the balance, for Christianity will only really spread in China when members of the upper classes begin

professing it, and there were men among the reformers who leaned towards it. Yes, it was a great chance, but it was allowed to slip. The anti-progressive party, with the Dowager-Empress at its head, saw quickly that if it came to serious reforms of the whole system, their own days, with all their alluring possibilities of sinecures and ill-gotten gains, would be numbered, so they suddenly turned on the Emperor and his friends.'

'It was not thought of much consequence at the time,' said I; 'I remember how one talked about a little palace revolution.'

'Exactly,' answered Hofer, 'for, as has ever been the case, the foreigners in Peking knew little of what was going on, nobody interfered, and not the slightest real protection nor moral countenance was given to those men who had tried to bring about what the foreigners themselves had preached to China, enlightenment and reform. Unconcerned, the foreigners looked on how this great and promising movement was smothered, and the representatives of all the civilised powers

prided themselves on their diplomatically correct attitude of non-interference in internal Chinese questions. Under their eyes time again was put back for years, and reaction and oppression once more ruled supreme in Peking, inaugurated by numerous executions about whose cruelty and atrocious details dark rumours leaked out from the Imperial City and circulated in whispers through the awe-stricken land. Nobody seemed to have any foreboding that in those days seeds were sown whose fruits we shall see ripening only too soon. For after having once taken the retrograde road the Empress could not stop. After having in September 1898 nipped reform in the bud, she could not do otherwise than lean more and more on the reactionary elements. She has very cleverly succeeded in leading general discontent away from her person and her Government, and in directing it against the strangers; and she has given the anti-foreign party to understand that it may count on her support. The Dowager-Empress certainly is much overrated, and she has no idea of the real distribution of power

in the world, but she is, like many so-called great people, past-mistress in the art of watching over her own momentary interests, and she also recognises in time which party in her country is the strongest to lean upon. For many years she stood at the head of the progressive party, which in China, of course, always means a mild dose of progress. In the time of the Chinese defeats by the Japanese she looked for and found support from the foreign powers, and when she recognised the growing bitterness in the country against the foreigners, she veered round to the reactionaries. To-day all the anti-foreign mandarins and the secret societies know that the Dowager-Empress only waits for their first victories to declare herself openly in their favour.'

'But surely,' said I, 'it is not possible that one will only just look on and wait what is going to happen next?'

Father Hofer answered: 'I hope to succeed in convincing people in Europe of the imminence of peril. Bishop Favier and I found no credence in Peking. A crisis would be

highly inconvenient to all, therefore nobody will admit that one can see it fast approaching. You see, the watchword has been passed that calm and order prevail in China, and that all capital invested there will soon yield enormous profits. Whoever tries to shake this comfortable optimism is naturally unwelcome, and most unwelcome to the financiers, whose influence in things Chinese has been the most disastrous of all. For the sake of these gentlemen, who sit snugly in Europe, and who in their own persons can never become the victims of Chinese fanatics or wars—for their sake railway and mining concessions were wrung from China almost by force, causing exasperation and hatred. And yet in the opinion of the financiers matters never were carried off quickly enough, and to their own taste they never obtained sufficient privileges. More than any Government the financiers were convinced of their own omniscience, and they would never listen to objections made to them from Peking.'

'Yes,' said I, 'that's a question about which my brother, like all representatives of great

capitalists at Peking, has a tale to tell. But not only their own agents never obtained enough for them, the foreign ministers also complained that they were compelled to exact concessions from the Chinese in a high-handed way which they considered harmful.'

The priest continued: 'I knew rather well some of the high Peking mandarins who were appointed to conduct such negotiations with the foreign representatives. There were some well-intentioned and just men amongst them who had made up their minds to the necessity of certain reforms and concessions. But they have come in despair to me complaining that always further-going demands were made upon them, which they could not possibly recommend to the throne. They said that never were Chinese feelings taken into consideration, and that they saw no end to the ever fresh exactions. But step by step they were forced to give way. At last one of them said to me: "The humiliations and exactions into whose acceptance I am compelled to persuade my Government will end by bringing the re-

actionary anti-foreign party into power, and I shall finally pay for it all with my head." And both of these predictions have since come true: the greedy insatiability of the foreigners has driven the Chinese Government into the arms of the reactionaries, and that same Chinese negotiator has become one of their first victims, a kind of scapegoat. After having possessed the highest honours his country can confer, he is to-day living in banishment in Turkestan, that is to say, if he is still amongst the living. He is a truly tragical figure of modern Chinese history.'

'But what can yet be done?' I asked.

'First of all, never to show in Peking the slightest weakness and inconsistency, for even the Chinese will not let themselves be treated as they have been and rest satisfied without thinking how to use the first opportunity for revenge. The steps taken can never be re-traced, therefore watchfulness and anticipation of all eventualities are now a matter of self-preservation. The Empress might also be given to understand that at the first disorder the foreigners would take part for the reformers

and for the Emperor, and put him into power again. That threat is a trump which, strange to say, has never been played. But the first of all measures ought to be sufficient military preparations for all emergencies, and to hold mounted men in readiness, who might be landed at the first notice to protect the railroad between Tientsin and Peking, for we must never forget that fear is, after all, the only real hold which the white man has over the Oriental.'

'And now you are going to report on all this in Europe?'

'Yes, I consider it my duty to warn once more, for if the present moment is allowed to slip by without a check being put on the Empress and her friends, those very things must necessarily occur which one would escape from, and we should see a catastrophe in China such as has never yet been. Then indeed would commerce and all enterprises in China be interrupted for years, and we should be driven into complications, expenses, and sacrifices whose end cannot be foreseen.'

LETTER XXIV

NEW YORK, *March* 1900.

THIS morning the mail again brought a letter from China for Ta. I gave it him. After a while he came back, and even through the Oriental stolidity of his countenance great perturbation could be seen. He said that he must entreat me to let him go back at once to Peking as his mother insisted on his returning. I could not understand this, for we send money regularly to his mother, so that she is really better off than if Ta were with her. But he remained unmoved by all I could say, and only repeated that it was a letter after whose receipt he could not tarry any longer, if he would not be an absolutely worthless son. Happily just then Father Hofer came to lunch with us. I put the case before him, and asked for his advice. Ta was called in. They had a long consultation in Chinese, the priest read the letter, and then he turned to me. 'Well,' he said, 'here we have an immediate confirmation of what I told you a few days ago. The Chinese converts in and around Peking seem

to know that hard times are near at hand, and that great events are brewing. Ta's mother, who is a widow, lives with her younger children and with Ta's wife, like so many Christians in the neighbourhood of the Petang, and she is evidently terribly frightened because she has heard threats against the Christians, the foreigners, and all those who have anything whatever to do with them. The letter is dictated by her to a relative, and he adds on his own account that Ta ought to make haste to return. He says that Ta being a Tartar and bannerman, he really had no legal right to go any farther than a certain zone around Peking. Several times inquiries have already been made about him to his mother, who so far has been able to put off the questions by subterfuges or by small presents. But it seems that now some men who are ill-disposed towards his family have begun talking about Ta's prolonged absence, and to purchase these people's silence sums would be required which Ta's relatives never could raise, and if they should be denounced by these enemies they would be imprisoned, put to torture, and

would lose all they possess, particularly in the present time when all Christians do well to keep quiet, so as not to attract notice.'

'But do you believe that the whole story is true?' I asked the Father.

'Oh yes,' he answered, 'for it is so essentially Chinese. Nowhere as in China does every single individual possess so many enemies, that is, people who sit upon him and who will use anything they know to his disadvantage for the purpose of fleecing him. It is the country of denunciations and extortions. Everybody there lives in perpetual fear of some one else more powerful. That is the rule through all ranks. Secret societies, great spying systems spread through the whole land like invisible nets, and they have now turned their activity against the Christians and all those who deal with the foreigners. In my opinion it is the sinister prelude of a great catastrophe, for all the present doings remind me entirely of the times preceding the massacre of the foreigners at Tientsin in 1870.'

'And what do you advise me to do about Ta?'

‘I am afraid you will have to decide on sending him home, for the anxiety about his mother will not allow him to be quieted any more, and he evidently considers it his duty to return to her. I need not tell you how much a Chinaman venerates his parents—that Chinese characteristic even the most superficial guide-books contain. Although I for my part through many years’ experience have come to entertain some doubts whether this veneration really is so very great, certainly every Chinese will try to keep up the appearance of being an excellent son, and for that end he will even be ready to sacrifice much. Ta evidently is loth to leave you; he tells me that, if he had no mother, he would cut off his pig-tail and remain for ever with you, and more than that no Chinaman can say; but he has made up his mind that he must go home. They all lay such enormous value on certain things which in their opinion belong to outward decorum. I have known Chinese servants to nurse harsh, unjust masters with the utmost devotion through smallpox or typhoid, and not out of pity or attachment,

but merely for appearances' sake—they would not seem to be faithless servants. That same feeling shows itself daily when we entertain guests in China; then everything will go to perfection in our houses—to that our Chinese servants will see for their own sakes, because where they serve, things are to look well. It is a question of *face*, and Ta's wish to return home is in my opinion also much more a matter of appearances than of inclination. I bet that according to his feelings he would prefer staying with you—although after a thirty years' residence in China I have given up making guesses about the feelings of the Chinese. They are the eternally inscrutable.'

Then we talked about Ta's return journey, and came to the conclusion that it would cause too many difficulties to let him travel home alone by way of San Francisco, for I feel responsible for this yellow human being whom I have carried away from his own world. Finally, Father Hofer offered to take Ta with him on his way to Europe and then back to China, and we gladly accepted. They are to start in a few days. Ta himself is evidently

very sorry to leave us, but on the other hand he seems pleased to accompany a high ecclesiastical dignitary, who, as business agent of the Church, impresses him more than my brother, who is merely in the service of a temporal firm!

But ever since all this has been decided upon, my heart is heavy!

LETTER XXV

NEW YORK, *March* 1900.

DEAREST FRIEND,—This morning my mood is as grey and dismal as the bit of sky which I see from the window, and along which clouds after clouds are sweeping past towards the sea.

This morning I accompanied Ta to the steamer on which he has left with Father Hofer for Europe. Early this morning he came in, like all other days, to bring my brother's shining boots, and his clothes carefully brushed and folded. All the regularity and method of his race showed in this small action of doing his work punctually to the last

minute. But his face was quite changed and swollen up from crying, so that his slit eyes almost disappeared. The idea of letting him go seemed suddenly so hard, that I also felt tears rising to my eyes, and seeing how unhappy he was I said, 'Won't you stay? There is time yet, Ta.' But then his face contracted and his lips puckered up into that curious Oriental smile which we Westerners never wholly comprehend, and which appears on occasions when we deem it quite out of place and even shocking. It is rooted, I believe, in a certain shyness and touching humility, and is supposed to say: 'My affairs are altogether unworthy of being allowed to cause you any disturbing thought.' And thus poor Ta grinned whilst he was very near crying, and he answered my question by putting his finger on his mouth, shaking his head and saying very softly, 'No speak, *Taitai*.'

Yes, he was right: why should we ever in life speak about that which cannot be changed?

Ta's departure quite had the character of a small ovation. The housemaids in their smart

white caps surrounded him, some brought him little souvenirs, and all called out: 'Happy voyage, Ta! Come back soon! But don't bring back a Chinese wife, Ta.'

And again his poor, tear-stained face contracted in forced smiles, as is required by good-breeding in the Far East when you feel right thoroughly moved and sad.

I drove with Ta to the ship where I was to put him in charge of Father Hofer, from Central Park down to the harbour, through the many different streets which grow ever poorer, uglier, and rougher. It is like descending a long ladder whose steps mark the different grades of material wealth from the palaces of Fifth Avenue to the most miserable tenement houses, from the Waldorf to the squalid hiding-places of mysterious existences, and to those small shops and bars which look as if they had been temporarily put up, and which one is quite astonished to meet yet anywhere in New York. That long road leads from dazzling heights to darkest abysses, from those who, flying before boredom, rush from pleasure to pleasure, to those others who, in

the struggle against hunger and cold, hurry onward from toil to toil.

On the steamer the ever same confusion reigned which always characterises the last hour before departure—the running, hurry, searching for friends, the excited talk and nervous laughter, the handshaking, kissing and crying. Numberless and varied are the human types which the New World sends back to Europe on each of these steamers, but they all come under the three great classes of those who travel either for business, pleasure, or health. Most of the travellers are accompanied by a lot of friends who see them off, so that a thick throng crowds up the deck. The ship's officers stand amongst it, as indifferent to comical as to melancholy scenes of farewell, which they have all seen enacted over and over again ; they give orders in loud, clear voices, with a certain air of correctness, as if every detail of their persons were in accordance with certain given regulations—they strike one as eminently European.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that I found Father Hofer. I handed Ta over to

him, and he promised me once more to care for him and bring him safely to China. And then the bell sounded to warn those off the ship who were not going to sail. Once more I shook hands with both, and I said to Ta, 'God bless you,' for in that last moment I knew by a kind of revelation that he was starting with open eyes to meet a great danger, simply because he considered it right to go—in his way a hero, notwithstanding the pigtail and slit eyes—and the wish accompanied him on his road, which has followed so many heroes, 'God bless you.'

After that I was surrounded by the throng of human beings who all hurried and strove for something, who all had their cares; in their midst, pushed and lifted as by waves, I got on to the gangway and into the dark shed close to which the steamer lay. I stood still for a moment, and through the broad doorway, which was just going to be closed, I looked back once more on the ship. It was no longer fastened to the wharf, a quiver seemed to be running over the monster as if a giant became conscious of his power. My eyes once more

sought for Ta and Father Hofer—but already the high dark doors closed and shut off the view.

Going back towards the streets, I walked behind an old and bent woman who was crying bitterly; a little boy was leading her, and I heard him say consolingly, 'Never mind, granny dear, they'll come back.' But the old woman continued to cry. She had probably seen many people go who never returned, and she knew that people occasionally come back, but that times never do.

Like a load the feeling to-day rests on me, that life is composed of nothing but successive episodes, and it seems to me, dear friend, as if existence were chopped up into little bits, and each place in it where a cut has been made hurts, and won't join to the next bit. A sudden sense of homelessness crushes me, and makes me feel so small and forlorn in this wide world where the rushing of millions only intensifies loneliness. Poor Ta always gave me the illusion that there still existed a link between me and those Chinese years. In some respects they were sad years, and they

brought disappointments, bitter news from home, and long, weary hours, when the great riddle of existence seemed more than ever oppressive and unanswerable—but . . . I realise only now how much I had taken root there—and besides . . . also over the grey days do we mourn once they are gone—only because they are gone, and because they carried away with them something of our own selves, which died and can return no more.

Since we have had these conversations with Father Hofer, I have the impression that the China which I knew is gone for ever. Till now I had always thought that I need only turn back and that I should find there everything just as I left it—but it is not so, we never find again everything, because nothing remains immovable, not even in China. Now the fear haunts me of what will happen if Hofer really is right with his predictions.

If only he succeeds in Europe and his warnings come yet in time! And then again I ask myself, Has it ever been possible to stave off events and to direct and rule fate? Human beings toil, care, and sorrow; they

would help and improve the world, but in all that they fancy to be doing for the benefit or detriment of others, in all actions on which they imagine to decide of their own free will, which they count as merits or omissions—in all that they are perhaps only the blind tools of a blind destiny. Who can know?

LETTER XXVI

NEW YORK, *March* 1900.

DEAR FRIEND,—What funny little traits one meets in all people! Like a crusader, Hofer has set out from his remote diocese. In a miserable house-boat on the Grand Canal, in a rattling cart over impassable roads, he has first travelled to Peking to warn there of the coming disaster, and when he found that nobody would listen to him, he started off towards America and Europe, there to raise his voice once more. Self-interested motives or personal fear have nothing to do with all this—he only wants to ward off a great danger from many innocents, to prevent the small cutting of western civilisation, which was

planted with so much difficulty in the Far East, from being destroyed in a great catastrophe—at all costs he wants to save ‘the deaf and blind of Peking.’

But the sublime has many lesser next-door neighbours, and the occupation with the Church evidently does not blunt the wit for what is practical. Hofer’s principle is that one should always reap small advantages, even on the road to the highest ends. During his resting days at New York he went to see Charles W. O’Doyle, who so far was quite a stranger to him, but on the strength of the Chinese origin of the latter’s millions, the Father has asked him for a contribution towards the mission fund, having probably heard that this great man looks upon his Catholicism as a luxury, for which he is willing to pay a good deal. He and more so the Princess of Armenfelde wear this religion like a jewel, like the symbol of social distinction, and amongst their own countrymen they owe to it many acquaintances in higher circles which they would otherwise never have made. For in the United States, *le Catholicisme est très-bien*

porté, as Madame Baltykoff said the other day.

But the funniest consequence of Father Hofer's appeal to O'Doyle's charity, and of the latter's fine sense for sensational conspicuousness in business, is, that it has brought me an order for pictures!

O'Doyle and his daughter have just been with me. He told me about Hofer's call, and gave me to understand that the cheque which he had handed him for the mission was worth Hofer's whole journey. Then he went on to say that he believed the Father to be right with all his evil prophecies, as they were entirely corroborated by the predictions of his agents in Hong-Kong.

'This summer the whole world's interest will be riveted on China,' O'Doyle said. 'I am rarely wrong when I make such assertions. If you've got money invested in China, listen to me and sell, for you'll be able to buy cheap later on—the whole secret of business success rests in these few words: buy low, sell high. It has always puzzled me that there still remain people who will persist in doing just the opposite.'

After I had assured him that I had no money in China nor anywhere else, he went on: 'We're going this summer to my cottage at Newport. I'm building a pagoda there for afternoon-tea. I've chosen the Chinese style, curved-up roofs, bright tiles, many dragons, plenty of little jingling bells; I've decided on that, because, as I said before, this year nothing but China will be talked about. Give me Charlie O'Doyle for knowing a thing or two ahead of others! My tea pagoda will be the success of the season. But I need Chinese views for the inner wall decoration: will you paint them?'

I gladly accepted this proposal, and father and daughter looked over my sketches—many of which I painted under your eyes. The Princess's taste runs in the picturesque melancholy line; a sunset on the Yangtse, old tumble-down walls in Hangtshou pleased her, but old O'Doyle rejected all that. 'I want nothing but pictures of Peking,' he said, 'for in Peking lies the greatest danger, so Hofer said, and that's the place which will be talked about.'

I don't believe that pictures ever were chosen on stranger principles!

Finally he decided on a corner tower of the Peking city wall, a view of the Imperial Town with the yellow palace roofs and a city gate through which Chinese soldiers are passing—the latter pleased him particularly, for he said that they all looked like robbers, ruffians, and highwaymen, so that they would seem very typical if disturbances really occurred during summer. He hinted at future orders—perhaps he wants to wait and see if the further news from China are such as to give these pictures an interest of actuality.

It was very funny to watch O'Doyle applying his fine business scent to picture subjects, but I did feel rather frightened to hear revolts and massacres quietly alluded to as events which are discounted beforehand, and through which shares merely go up and down. But the remembrance of the winter of '98 has reassured me. In those days we also heard constant talk about the Kangsu troops marching on Peking, where they expected to make up for their arrears of pay by plundering the

foreigners' houses. And a few attacks really did occur, but when after some days the legations' guards marched in, not a single murmur arose against the handful of armed strangers, and their mere presence was sufficient to control the great throbbing sea of yellow masses!

I dare say it will be the same this time!

LETTER XXVII

BERLIN, *May* 1900.

MORE than a month has passed without my writing to you. During that time I have crossed the Atlantic, and I am now standing on the same mainland as you—but oh, what endless distance lies between us—and you do not know yet what has happened during this interval. Why have I not written to you for so long? I might say that I had not had time enough. But that would not be true. I have been deterred from it by a vague feeling which I can scarce explain myself—a dread, a last loyalty called silence. To you I could not write platitudes such as during the last

weeks I have heard so much and used myself. For there are occasions when we involuntarily seek for protection behind conventionalism, which appears as a broad, much-frequented road, whose correctness is questioned by nobody. By keeping to entirely commonplace utterances, we are sure at least of showing only the surface of ourselves, and of revealing nothing that belongs to our inner life. To reach those true, hidden feelings, one must dive into the heart's depths, and we all dread doing that, for we never know what we may find there.

It has all been so very sudden. But, then, the end always seems to come suddenly.

I had first to grope for my own way before I could write to you.

He of whom we never spoke is dead.

We received a telegram in New York, telling us that he whose name I bear had been taken dangerously ill. A great fire had nearly destroyed the asylum in which he was confined for several years. He had been saved, but in consequence of the nervous shock, brain fever had set in. My brother cabled to his

firm for leave of absence, and with the first boat we left New York. When we arrived all was over. We only found a fresh grave. I dreaded that moment, not knowing what unexpected thoughts and feelings it might bring, for in the routine of daily life, with its small occurrences, we fancy to know ourselves, but face to face with unforeseen events, we always are surprises to ourselves. As we were walking towards the grave, I caught hold of my brother's arm, seeking protection from the unknown, but gradually the nervous strain relaxed — nothing unknown, nothing new appeared — nothing seemed changed. Then suddenly I became aware that I was perfectly calm.

What were my exact sensations?

His life has been so terrible for many years that, by comparison, his death could scarce seem so to anybody. And perhaps, if we only knew, for others also who have not, like him, overstepped the boundary which we call reason, life is the real misery, not death. We only have been taught, since generations, to put such wrong values on both. For how

could people be governed, how could people be led to God *qui feraient franchement fi de la vie*? God? He is supposed to have also given this one special life, and He probably deemed it as valuable as the sparrow's, which He allows not to fall from the roof. And yet this life went to wreck and ruin, and the spirit was hopelessly lost in benighted darkness. Like a chain with a leaden weight, this one existence fastened itself to another one, paralysing and dragging it down. That other being had been endowed with the faculty of feeling to the utmost the pain and degradation of such a burden; hopes, aspirations, yearnings had been given it, but none of all the possibilities held out ever was fulfilled. And now, after the one life, like a blunted, unconscious mass, had spent years in drowsy, heavy brooding, and after the other life had toiled through all that weary time, with the horrible knowledge of being wasted and useless—now a brutal catastrophe has brought the clumsy end. Nothing is explained, and there is nothing that reconciles. We stand before the senseless facts. Why had all that to be?

Providence? No. That idea to me explains nothing. The conception of an almighty power, which creates and governs worlds, and which yet allows a few simple human destinies to get so hopelessly entangled, that conception is full of such cruelty and arbitrariness, that one is not consoled, but only tempted to call it to account.

During the last years I have always tried to keep down such thoughts and to overcome bitterness. But how hard it often was! Particularly when spring-time came, spring for others who thought it quite natural to be happy—then it was bitter indeed to be quite lonely, like an accidentally existing being for whom no place has been foreseen when the world was wisely planned. For we easily accept the great prodigality with which every second Nature wastes millions, which all carried the possibilities of existence, and which yet, without having lived, had to sink back into the grey unknown, from which they longingly had risen; and there is nothing of which our wisdom is more easily convinced than the irrevocableness of the

sufferings of others. But when it is ourselves that such destiny strikes, when the irrevocableness seizes us, crushing all that wanted to be, when every day begins with new hope, yet never brings ought but deception and the same weary evening—then only do we realise the enormousness of the world's suffering, because it is our suffering. Oh, the confident hope of young years, which gradually turns into sceptical waiting! When first we meet unhappiness and injustice, we think it is only a passing error—something like an arithmetical mistake which will be quickly put right again. We deem everything that forms part of us so important and so worthy of development, that it appears an unbearable thought to see any of those precious gifts wither away unused.

Dustlike, infinite small seeds blown into endless space by the wind, that asks neither why nor where—yes, for them reckless waste-fulness is the world's law. But for us? Oh no!

But experiences daily augment a long chain of evidence, and looking back we discover how much died in us ere it was allowed to live,

talents, and ambitions, and yearning to love—all things given us in vain, and doomed beforehand—for many are called, but few are chosen. At first we fight against it, but gradually the conviction grows that we also belong to the wasted ones, to the millions whose appearing was entirely useless. Overproduction. Foam that flows over the goblet's rim.

He who has thus once valued his own life shivers to the marrow of his bones. Why go on any further? Instead of all that we once eagerly wanted, nothing remains but the one great longing to sink down wearily like the dead leaves, to be hidden under a snow-white cover, and there to dissolve into the damp, brown earth, to become nourishment for the ever-wasteful earth—for that, at least, we might perhaps serve.

How often have such thoughts come to me during the last years, and have I striven to attain calm and quiet. For to turn bitterness and indignation into tender pity and sadness is life's task, which we must complete would we not end in despair.

And now I have been standing before a

grave. A poor, wasted being rests there. He did not mean to harm me—once he even loved me in his own way, for so many things go by that name. No, he did not mean to harm me—he has only destroyed my whole life—he was forced to live just long enough for that—in everything else he too was merely a poor, wasted life. And nobody can answer: Why had he to be, and being, why had he to suffer so much, and to inflict so much suffering on others? He also has once surely felt the great indignation and bitterness, when he first became aware of the approaching doom, when he no longer could as he would, when he struggled and felt compelled to commit strange actions, whose motives he afterwards no longer remembered. He too had surely rebelled and fought against the incomprehensible and stronger power; and yet he also had to submit at last to destiny, for destiny always is stronger than our small intelligence and will—even when destiny is called madness.

‘The terrible attacks of raving,’ the keeper told us, ‘had gradually subsided during the last part of his life, before the fire occurred;

it seemed as if he gradually sank into utter apathy. We often see that happening to our patients; they finally become quite easy to deal with.'

And I thought, yes, at first revolt, then blunted, weary apathy, that is indeed human destiny. Some find it here in a narrow asylum cell, others out there in the world's wide madhouse.

'Thank God, his sufferings are ended now, and the poor gentleman is at rest,' said the keeper.

I looked at him in astonishment. Year after year that man saw such destinies before him, and he could still praise God!

But perhaps he was right in a way. For if suffering truly is evil, let us hope that death may indeed mean end and deliverance.

I grew calmer and calmer. I was so absolutely quiet that it astonished me. And yet it could scarce have been otherwise. My life's despair, with its wild charges against fate, lie far back in dead and gone years. When nobody yet guessed it, and all considered me a happy woman, but when I

already saw the inexplicable horror before me, and tried to shield as long as I could that miserable life with its wretched secret from the gaze and knowledge of others—that was my hardest time of suffering. Then I rebelled. And a little later on, when the inevitable discovery and catastrophe had come, when all seemed crushed—how hard was the feeling then of utter uselessness, how unbearable the misery of my young life, which seemed to lie before me so endlessly long. Now all that is overcome. Since a long time the wish of a great silence has fallen on me. I am like one of those deserted houses in which all have died, and which resignation chooses for her abode. This grave changes nothing. I stood before it without mourning. But thanks be to destiny that from that grave no accusation can arise against me; thanks also be to destiny that in my own heart bitterness since long speaks no more.

Sorrow and pity alone have remained.

LETTER XXVIII

BERLIN, *May* 1900.

MY brother's time in Europe will soon be up. In a week he must go back to New York. Just now he has gone for a few days to see his chiefs. I am waiting for him here, and we shall sail together. I accompany him again, of course, for he and I belong to one another since so many years that I could not imagine any other life. You, dear friend, will understand this, although here, of course, many friends advise me to remain in Berlin and make my home here—as if that were so easy, and required nothing more than to rent an apartment and to hire servants. Some one drawled the other day: 'Twould be just what's missing in Berlin, house of independent woman, intellectual *milieu*, neutral ground—might even attain political importance.'

What a lonely little home that would be! And the intellectual *milieu*, how utterly it does fail to attract me! For whom? Yes, for whom? It is absolutely indifferent to me if

at my funeral some 'politically important' men say: 'Again one pleasant house less; what excellent dinners that woman gave,' and then look at their watch to go and dine elsewhere.

Oh yes, if I were young, and still possessed the buoyancy which the belief in the importance of things always bestows on us. But I am weary—nothing but every day a little more weary.

And social ambitions? Alas, what for?

If my brother were not with me, I should be quite lost, for I feel so strange in Berlin—stranger almost than in America or China!

I had always clung to the belief that when I once returned to Germany, it could not be otherwise than that a delicious home-feeling would at once enwrap me. And now it is all so different from what in the distance I thought it would be! Everything in life always is different from what we expected—but scarce ever any better.

Since I am back in Germany I am constantly waiting for the awakening of my home-feeling; but it still slumbers. I had hoped

much from the sight of the Brandenburger Thor. But in vain. That the avenue with the statues of the Electors and other great men did not rouse it, is not strange, for that was entirely new to me, and has only convinced me once more that a right instinct led me when, as a child, I fought against lessons of history, for the opinions and final judgments of history are evidently not at all settled as yet.

Here, in the Buckingham Hotel, Unter den Linden, where we live because Americans recommended it to my brother, I shall also scarcely attain the feeling of home, sweet home.

My continual searching for a home-feeling is half-touching, half-comical, and it reminds me of Loti searching for his lost faith in the Holy Land. But never fear, dear friend, I am not going to write a whole book about it, like Loti, for I have come much quicker than he to an explanation of the uselessness of our search. I am afraid we have both stayed away too long, he from the sanctuaries of faith and I from the scenes of youth—for

faith and for home there is perhaps also such a thing as a 'too late.' If we have once become utterly estranged from them, we do not understand them any more, and can never find our way back.

But the longing for my former home is so strong in me that I will at least freshen up its memories to carry them with me, when I once more set sail outward bound. Here in Berlin everything has grown so new, strange, and big, that I look in vain for traces of my own small past. I will look for old tracks out of town in the country, and to-morrow morning I intend going to the estate which once was the home of my mother's parents, and in which I lived, as an orphan, with relations, until the unexpected whim of fortune occurred which brought a rich husband to me, a penniless girl.

As a poor relative kept out of kindness, I have spent there many a bitter hour, and I have envied my brother, whom I seldom saw in those days, but of whom I knew that he was preparing for a useful, independent profession. How I wished to do the same! But

my relations considered it their duty to bring me up like their own daughters, that is, we were taught modern languages, fancy work, a little drawing and painting, and when visitors came, we were expected to see that flowers were put into their rooms. It was highly unpractical, but perfectly *standesgemäss*. I envied the *Mamsell* on the estate who honestly earned her bread, and I tried to learn from her. But my relations only laughed at this and said that I was sure to make a good match some day. Well, they were right in their way; but afterwards I envied the *Mamsell* even more.

But notwithstanding all bitter hours, Garzin has always remained in my memory the one spot on earth to which I have a right—the right which we gain through loving. In my thoughts I have always called it home, although my relations to whom it then belonged are long dead. Through unintelligible feudal laws it has passed into the hands of an utter stranger, an old man who never goes there, and who drags his small remnant of a sickly life from one watering-place to another.

So to Garzin I will go early to-morrow morning, and at the thought of seeing it again my heart beats, and I fancy one must feel like this when going to a rendezvous. And truly it is a rendezvous—with the past!

I keep going to the window, from which one sees the narrow hotel-yard transformed into a miniature garden, and I look up along the high walls to the stripe of sky above me, and every grey cloud that glides past frightens me, for I should not like to see my dear old Garzin in rainy weather, but in its lightest, sun-spotted, spring garment. That always suited it best!

LETTER XXIX

BERLIN, *May* 1900.

I HAVE seen it in sunshine!

Quite early I left the Friedrichstrasse station. At first the elevated train wends its way above the ugly tangle of streets, past high houses into whose backyards one looks as if to spy into all their secrets. Dust, soot, a bewildering net of rails on which the early

suburban trains seem to be running a race. At every station the same throng of pale, restless town-dwellers' faces, all of them people who must rush somewhere to do some work, all of them tiny wheels in one huge machine. Everything grey and joyless, and all, oh! so weary and worn even in the early morning.

At last we are out in the open flat land, where spring bursts upon us like a surprise. Pale green cornfields, vegetable gardens, fenced-in nurseries of small trees. 'Behfelde,' 'Straussberg,' and other well-known station names strike my ear. Soon after that we enter a forest of high fir-trees with juniper bushes between them. In the woods, night's veils still seem to hang, bits of bluish fog float about; the smoke of the engine mixes with it, and crawls between the first rows of high, reddish stems, till it is lost in the dark depths of the forest.

Then the train again rushes out of the woods, and on the right the peatland extends, already the beginning of the Garzin district. Near each black, square-shaped waterpool, the cut peat is heaped up in regular pyramids.

A bluish haze lies over the marsh, white birch-trunks glisten through it, and pale green, heart-shaped birch leaves tremble in the morning air; further back, everything vanishes in the early mist.

Now the train stops. I alight. This is the station from which an hour's drive takes you to Garzin. As I am still standing undecided on the little platform, a porter passes by, conducting a Berlin family, which also has got out here, and I hear him saying: 'Here, over the bridge is the way to the Garzin branch-line.'

A branch-line to Garzin? Innovations here also?

I follow the family from Berlin and the porter, who is carrying a bicycle and many bags. We cross the high bridge under which the train that brought us is just passing, rushing onward towards the east, and we get into the narrow gauge, toy-like train.

'*Kein Gepäck, Madamken?*' (No luggage, little ma'am?) asks the porter.

Softly I answer, 'No,' and I draw the thick black veil more tightly around me, for I have

surely seen that man formerly, and I suddenly feel so afraid, as if I were doing something very wrong and could be found out.

The family from Berlin consists of father and mother, both fat and well-to-do looking people, who take everything for granted, who look at life in a matter-of-fact way, and never puzzle about anything, who abhor socialists and vote for Richter. Then there is a grown-up daughter, evidently *eine höhere Tochter*, who may even have passed her teacher's examination, and a small, sickly daughter, with an oldish, embittered child's face. The party is completed by a cousin, a young man, on whose pale, pimply face the short, fair hair of a budding beard looks like scanty cornstalks on a meagre soil. He wears a bicycling costume in which his thin legs and long, flat feet are particularly obtrusive. His grey flannel shirt is laced in front with red silk cord. He carries a white Tyrolean felt-hat, adorned with woodcocks' feathers, and on his nose eyeglasses are firmly planted. These five people talk in loud voices about their affairs, as if they were quite alone, so that I

cannot help hearing that they are going on account of Ricke's health for a few days to Garzin, and that the Hohenzollern Hotel near the Town Lake has been recommended to them by friends who stayed there last summer.

My old Garzin a health-resort! And a Hohenzollern Hotel!

In twenty minutes the toy-like train carries us through pine-woods, deep sand, and low, damp meadows, and then we arrive at the entrance of the little town of Garzin, where we alight. The Berlin family, conducted by the porter, walks deliberately through the main street towards the Town Lake.

I follow slowly. The pavement has remained as rough as it ever was, and consists of stones of all shapes and sizes pressed into the ground. I recognise the small, one-storied houses, at whose doors high stemmed rose-trees lift up their branches, just now covered with tender, young, brownish leaves. One of the first houses still carries the signboard on which a coffin is painted, and next to it stands the little, old-fashioned inn, over whose gate the words are written: '*Der alte Brauch*

wird nicht gebrochen, hier können Familien Kaffee kochen' (The old custom will not be discarded, families are here allowed to cook their coffee.)

But next to the old and well known, how much that is unfamiliar! A whole row of new houses, real suburban villas, pretentious and in bad taste. And truly a regular hotel, separated from the street by wire railing, and standing in the midst of a garden full of young, miserable-looking plants. Behind it I see the Town Lake. I remember it as a dreamy, quiet sheet of silvery water, surrounded by a wilderness of bulrushes and reeds, a home of wild duck and crested grebe. Now people row across it in brightly painted gondolas, and on the other bank a large, square building has been erected, on whose roof the word 'Sanatorium' stands out against the sky in big, gilt letters.

I hurried on and got to the market-place. There everything has remained unchanged: the small shop of the Widow Wronkow, where, as children, we spent many pennies on buttons, bright cottons, little knives, and such treasures;

the corner store of Rückheim, where the notabilities of the town met of an evening over a glass of beer; the pastor's house with the two old linden-trees, standing on both sides of the doorsteps. Formerly pastor-children of all ages used to play in the sand under these linden-trees, and in this respect at least the present is quite like the past: a whole row of small children dig in the sand, and the *Frau Pastorin* of to-day watches them from the window with the new-born baby in her arms.

In the market-place stands the little monument erected after the war of 1870, an eagle sitting with outspread wings on a block of granite. Behind it, steps lead up to the church.

And I suddenly felt there a great longing to enter this church in which I have taken so many resolutions, and where I prayed to God to set me great, heroic tasks, which did not hinder that I straight away stumbled over my little daily duties. I wanted so much to see once more the altar with the twisted columns and the fat, carved wooden angels,

the wreaths which are hung up there from one harvest-feast to the other, and the black commemorative tablets on which the names are inscribed of the men from Garzin who were killed during the wars of '64, '66, and '70.

But the church was locked, as it is proper and correct for a Protestant church to be, for Protestantism brings up quiet, punctual people, and it disapproves of sudden yearnings and emotional aspirations. The Protestants are expected to go to God as to a notary or a doctor, in the regular consultation hours, which are advertised in the local paper. On Sunday mornings at ten o'clock, the God of the Protestants is at home.

The Garzin church has been endowed with a new spire, and the old birches seem to have grown higher yet; their thin branches, which look like knotted threads, sway softly in the wind, knocking against the high church windows that glisten in the sun. The small churchyard of former generations, in the middle of which the church stands, looks quite as of old, a tangled mass of ivy, grasses, and wildflowers creeping over the old, weather-

worn tombstones. I looked for an old tablet about which I often used to wonder as a girl, and it really is still there, and I read the quaint old verses chiselled into the moss-eaten stone, and which snow and rain have almost effaced :

‘Here lies the Wüsterdorf Johann.
He was a weary, wandering man,
And wore the chains of sin’s hard ban.
Lord God ! judge mildly Thou this man,
For by his wish he ne’er began
The toilsome road through life’s short span.’

In those former days these words seemed so mysterious that I invented long stories about the Wüsterdorf Johann’s misdeeds ; but now I think the inscription might serve as epitaph for any one of us.

I stood a long while up there amongst the old tombstones, watching the birds busily carrying stalks and mosses in their little beaks, for by the transmitted experience of many generations, they have learnt that one may well build nests under the wing of the church.

Then I went on towards the *Schloss* of Garzin.

And there it stood before me.

Quite unchanged, just as so many years ago, only a little more abandoned, untended, and uncared for. I stood still. Tears gathered in my eyes. Out of the depth of my loneliness a cry seemed to rise towards the old house: 'Love me, do love me a little!' as if it were a human being, and I fancied I could hear it answering: 'At last, at last, thou hast come home again.'

There is the big green grass-plot with the four lilac bushes full of flowers, the old sundial, the drive leading up to the house and the house itself, a big two-storied building, whose perfectly plain front has been decorated in the times of Schinkel with Grecian ornaments that look as if they were astonished at themselves in these surroundings of northern nature, just as they used to be! On both sides of the house the old linden-trees stand whose branches trail on the ground, and one wall is covered with knotty, intertwined ivy in which numberless sparrows chirp.

Yes, this once was home!

I stood still and gazed, past and present dissolving into one sole feeling of intense

sadness which seemed to well up from some great depth and to fill the whole world.

‘Wouldn’t you also like to see the *Schloss*?’ the voice of the young man in the bicycling costume suddenly asks me in the midst of my dreams, and I become aware of the presence of the whole Berlin family being led by a little servant-girl who carries a bunch of keys.

‘But do they show it?’

‘I should think so,’ answers the sportive youth. ‘For a tip to the inspector’s servant-girl any one can have a look for once at such a home of the poverty-stricken land-owners.’

In my astonishment at hearing Garzin spoken of as a show-place for tourists, I follow without thinking. But standing in the old familiar rooms amongst these strange people, myself a stranger like them, I felt that I ought not to have come. The jokes of the Berliners hurt me as if I saw some one dear and dead, roughly handled. On no account would I be recognised, and yet I cannot understand how it is possible that I can remain there so unnoticed that not all

the lifeless things even nod and whisper: 'Be greeted, be welcomed back amongst us.'

From the wide, empty hall we entered the drawing-room. How uninhabited, cheerless, and bare it felt coming from the sunshine outside. A few pieces of the old furniture still stand there; they have grown very shabby, and look like poor, sick people whose diseases and sores are stared at by inquisitive students of medicine; I recognised the striped, threadbare carpet, and even a well-known hole mended so many years ago.'

'I say, Karl,' says the fat woman from Berlin to her husband as she touches a sofa-cover, 'we're more swell than this in the *Köpnicker Strasse*.'

And the fat Karl answers: 'Pon my word, in these baronial halls one might yet end by pitying the *East Elbians*.'

The great yellow ballroom is the only thing that impresses the woman from Berlin. Pointing to the many white stucco heads dating from the Schinkel epoch, she asks: 'I say, Karl, are those the ancestors of the proprietors?'

'*Gottedoch, Mama,*' answers the elder daughter reprovingly, 'can't you see that those are all Grecian gods and goddesses?'

We enter another empty room.

'This was the bedroom of the gracious little *Comtessen,*' says the young peasant girl who is showing us over the house.

Yes, she has been rightly informed—that was the bedroom of the gracious little *Comtessen*. How well I remember the small white beds—now it has been quite emptied. On the faded red wallpaper some brighter coloured spots mark the places where pictures used to hang. On one wall one single old painting has been left. It represents a saint sitting quite nude in a rocky landscape; he holds a piece of paper on which he is busily writing.

'That old chap up there is evidently writing to Wertheimer's to order a shirt,' says the sportive youth, and although I feel near crying, I must laugh, for we used to make exactly the same remark when the poor saint was the target of our youthful wit.

On going out of this room I stopped a

moment near the door. Yes, really, there they were, the faint pencil strokes which my uncle used to make over our heads when he took our measure and marked on this door how much we had grown during the year. Where are the little girls that used to stand there before the uncle, and to whom he called out, 'Children, don't stand on tiptoe! don't cheat!'? They were so eager to grow: now they have long outgrown the old house.

Passed! All gone and passed!

I lingered long in the park, where empty bottles and greasy sandwich papers have been thrown amongst the bushes by Berlin excursionists, where the weeds grow in the paths and flower-beds, where the reeds advance ever further into the little lake, and where, notwithstanding all the neglect and decay, it is yet so full of spring's beauty, as in former months of May!

I only returned to town by the last train. I tarried as long as possible, for I felt that I was seeing it all for the last time. It was late when I once more was at the Friedrich-strasse station. I walked from there to the

Buckingham Hotel. On such an evening stroll one brushes past much ugliness and misery. I pressed my face into the bunch of lilac that I had brought back from Garzin, and in the midst of the rushing and buzzing noise of the street it seemed to me as if I heard quite faintly the quaint old words which might serve as epitaph for all of us:—

‘Lord God! judge mildly Thou this man,
For by his will he ne’er began
The toilsome road through life’s short span.’

LETTER XXX

BERLIN, *May* 1900.

I AM employing these last days in knocking at the doors of a few old friends, and yesterday I went to see a distant relation of my mother’s whom I call Uncle. I believe you would like him, and so I will tell you about him.

According to outward human classification he belongs to the German professors, but in reality I fancy he is a being of some classical period, perhaps the reincarnation of an ancient Greek sage who used to dwell in a tub and to

look on at the transitory phases of things; or he may perhaps have been formerly the abbot of a celebrated cloister of the Italian Renaissance; but no Savonarola, who declaimed against the perversity of mankind and wanted to regenerate the world, rather a monk of the contemplative kind, who consigned his observation to old chronicles, illuminating them with minutely painted letters, and who did not feel called upon to act as reformer, thinking that he who keeps his own heart pure has done his share.

Uncle lives near the Thiergarten, in a street which widens out into a small square where a church stands surrounded by lilac bushes. It is not an old part of Berlin, but neither is it aggressively new, and there is something soothing about this silent street. Looking at those serious, somewhat uniform houses, you involuntarily fancy that their inhabitants must be quietly working men, who write and read a lifetime in the same rooms, and who ignore the hurry of frequent changes of abode. It is a quarter of savants.

As long as I can remember, Uncle lives in

the same house on the third floor. His study is a large back room, from whose balcony one looks on gardens which just now are one mass of delicate spring foliage. Above his writing-table a marble relief is put up against the wall. It represents Uncle's wife who died long ago, and the noble profile bears a great likeness to Byron or Achim von Arnim. It is a human type which one meets seldom nowadays, and which seems to have been more frequent formerly. It may be that human types disappear with the ideals of their epoch. Who would fight to-day like Byron for the independence of Greece? If one may rely on the lines of a face, my dead aunt must have been a true gentlewoman at heart, who would have scorned to derive advantage from the misery of others.

During the years I have spent abroad Uncle has grown an old man. His long hair has turned white, and he is so thin, as if earthly matter which we require for living had already fallen from him. Looking at him I remembered the words '*ein verklärter Leib.*' His beautiful clear eyes have remained the same ;

they only have grown larger, and it seems as if they overlooked much that obtrudes upon our view, and as if they distinguished things that are still hidden to us.

Harmony and calmness surround him.

He lives in his own special world, avoiding all that might tend to distract him from it, as if he were afraid not to finish some great task. He spoke at once of his life-work, *Florence in the Time of the Renaissance*, over which he was busy years ago when I first left Germany to wander abroad, and which just now appears in a beautifully illustrated edition. He showed me some proof-sheets. How small and useless do most lives appear with their hurried, varying objects that leave no trace, when compared to such a life which is entirely dominated by one great, lasting interest.

In Uncle's house I met another guest. A small, hunchbacked, narrow-chested man, with a clever, sharp-cut face, penetrating eyes, and a bitter smile playing round his finely curved lips. Hanz-Buckau is an old acquaintance of mine. In a high, grey, old building near the Spree he has been librarian for many years, and

in the leisure hours which this occupation and his frequent sickness leave him, he translates classical Italian poems, and he composes sonnets of satirical tendencies. In the evenings a very select society assembles in Hanz-Buckau's rooms, for he is one of the few people in Berlin who has succeeded in having a real 'salon.' The people who come to him always appear cleverer there than in their own houses. It seems as if he knew how to call forth their hidden wit, or maybe he loans them of his own. Hanz-Buckau has an unbounded admiration for beautiful women, and they must divine the secret altar which this poor misshapen man raises for them in his heart, for I know not of one who did not grow fond of him. Poor Hanz-Buckau, who feels beauty so intensely, and who therefore suffers so particularly under his own appearance, leads in his way a perpetual fight between the body and the spirit. He has always reminded me of Leopardi, of that great Italian who carried in his heart an eternally unsatisfied longing, who mourned for the Past and had never possessed a Present. Hanz-Buckau is such

a Leopardi nature with a good deal of Berlin salt added to it. He is devoted to Uncle, and has well defined his calm and self-possessed distinction by giving him the nickname, 'Professor Serene Highness.'

Uncle's inner harmony and the way he has of toning down all that is excessive are soothing to the passionate Hanz-Buckau. He looks at all things very critically, takes nothing for granted, and delights in mocking at the herd-nature of mankind, and the easiness with which it accepts idols, that always prove to be tinsel ones. To-day Hanz-Buckau spoke much about this, for he finds it hard to have to take the world as it is, and he is indignant at seeing everywhere such a wrong valuation of things and people.

'One declaims and preaches enough against physical laziness,' he said; 'but intellectual apathy is rather encouraged. One half of mankind is to remain in it altogether, and of the other half as many members as possible. By this systematic encouragement of dependency all the false greatness is alone possible.'

And later on he said: 'We, the so-called nation of thinkers, really dread nothing more than having to think for ourselves, particularly about those things which concern us practically. Therefore one is always astonished abroad when public opinion in Germany for once clearly shows itself; usually it sleeps in the happy conviction that ministers, privy councillors, and professors, who all are supposed to be endowed with some of the "By the grace of God" prestige, are watching and on the look-out. We always rely on possessing in an emergency the necessary great men, as if we had rented them once for all, and we refuse to perceive that in that article we are often sadly imposed upon. We are incorrigible hero-worshippers, and we know how to make shift with very little. When times are hard heroes grow smaller, just like the loaves when corn is dear.'

Uncle answered: 'That which seems characteristic to you, dear Hanz-Buckau, of the land and epoch in which chance let you be born, has in reality existed everywhere and always, for all times have always been

convinced of being rich in great men. But the final judgment of history often pronounces that place to be but an empty desert where the contemporaries saw a throng. In immediate vicinity everything looks large, but when objects begin to recede into a certain distance which allows comparison and the application of a general standard measure, then only the true and lasting importance of things shows itself. The true giants, and they alone are of consequence, always make their way finally, and to falsify values entirely is only possible for a short time; therefore do not grudge the one-day idols their one-day adorers.'

'Your uncle,' said Hanz-Buckau, turning to us, 'has already overcome the notion of time. To him Luther, Frederick the Great, Goethe, and Bismarck are present realities, manifestations of one and the same great Germanic genius which exist together. He overlooks all lesser ones, and the resentment which we small ones feel at the temporary false greatness of others, who are in reality just as insignificant as ourselves, is quite indifferent

to him. Your uncle values only the masterful geniuses. And I will tell you a secret: in this respect your classical uncle is at heart, and without knowing it himself, one of the most modern of moderns.'

Hanz-Buckau said this with the half-ironical tenderness which always trembles in his voice when he talks of Uncle. It seems as if nobody were to know how fond he is of him.

It was getting late, and talking, those two had accompanied me to the landing in front of Uncle's apartment door. A narrow staircase leads up from there to the loft, and from high above a golden ray of the afternoon sun fell just on Uncle, who was leaning with his hand on the railing; such a transparent fine hand, which, during a lifetime, has busily held the pen! I had already taken leave, but a thousand memories drew me towards him like invisible threads; I turned back once more and bent over those dear old hands and a tear fell on them; for Uncle is one of the very last yet left from my childhood's time!

'My poor child,' said Uncle, and his voice was full of the pity of those who already stand

beyond life's struggle for those others who are yet in the very midst of it. Perhaps also that Uncle guessed how intensely lonely I felt in that moment, for there lay a warning in his words to be calm, and to overcome all excessive feeling, and, if it cannot be overcome, to hide it at least deep in one's heart. Like a figure of Olympian calmness Uncle appeared to me, or rather like an old Maharatta chief, who showed me once in India his gold-threaded shawl, saying: 'It protects against sun and cold, against wind and dust, and its greatest service will once be to cover me in my dying hour, thus hiding my last agony.' Uncle surely possesses such a gold-threaded Maharatta shawl, for we only see of him what he thinks fit, and that is all harmoniously transfigured—'Serene Highness,' as Hanz-Buckau says.

LETTER XXXI

BERLIN, *May* 1900.

DEAR FRIEND,—Of some hotels in Switzerland and Italy, Baedeker mentions in paren-

thesis that they are much frequented by Germans. The experienced traveller avoids such hotels. Of the Buckingham, at which we are staying here, Baedeker could say, 'It is much frequented by diplomats, princes, and Americans.'

This hotel is *le dernier cri* of fashion and comfort combined. Only a few little German inconveniences have been allowed to pass by unobserved. There is a great want of large wardrobes, to make up for which your drawing-room boasts of shaky Louis XVI. brackets with some fragile nicknacks which are supposed to look *gemütlich*. But all in all it pretends to be as American as possible.

'Why, you are playing at Waldorf Astoria,' I said to the Manager Picus as we arrived. He took this as the highest possible compliment, murmured something about 'pioneer of culture in Berlin,' and ever since he has been full of condescending attentions to me, almost as if I were an ambassador, for nothing does Manager Picus love better than an ambassador. But also for diplomats of less exalted rank

there is a warm place in his heart. They appear to him as bearers of many possibilities with whom one must make friends betimes.

In the first dining-hall—the room of the Chosen Few—several tables are reserved, at which only diplomats sit. When Manager Picus escorts some of these gentlemen to their places, he looks so solemn and has such a ‘peace upon earth’ expression, as if he were performing some holy rite.

The other day he ran to meet one of our most promising diplomats in the entrance hall. Beaming, smiling, and rubbing his hands he said: ‘I congratulate the Herr Graf on his nomination to X.’

‘Why, my dear Picus,’ answered the other, tapping him on the shoulder, ‘how do you know that already, it’s scarce out of the Foreign Office?’

And Picus answered, bashful and delighted: ‘The Herr Graf will understand, we also have our little connections, and gradually one ends by belonging oneself, so to say, to the diplomatic circle.’

But also otherwise Picus knows always how

to show proper deference. Just lately, on account of a short court mourning, he countermanded for the week the music that usually plays during meals. A travelling millionaire from Denver, Mrs. Bluffer, gave a dinner-party during that time at the Buckingham. I heard the lady, who looked very indignant at being deprived of something bought by good dollars, excitedly asking the solemn-looking head-waiter:

‘Waiter, why isn’t the band playing?’

‘It’s on account of court mourning, ma’am,’ and he went on to explain that the Buckingham being a hotel where so many princes and great people stopped, it had naturally to consider their feelings.

Mrs. Bluffer was evidently much impressed, and I heard Miss Bluffer whispering to her:

‘Oh, mumma darling, ain’t this too delightful? Why, it’s almost as good as if we were at court.’

My brother has come back yesterday from his journey to the coal and steel districts. As we went down in the evening to dinner we saw that the restaurant was remarkably full.

‘What’s the matter to-day?’ asked my brother; and Picus answered airily:

‘The last diplomatic changes all passing through my house. Oh, and, by the way, you will meet an acquaintance. Mr. Stone Stonehead from Peking is here. He has made the return journey by Siberia, and is now on his way to Rio—a poor advancement, I am afraid’; and Picus shrugged his shoulders at the varying chances which are to be found on the big diplomatic see-saw.

And truly there he was—the great Stone Stonehead, self-complacent and pompous as ever, not looking in the least as if he had had to rough it, but, on the contrary, well-fed and fat, an alluring advertisement for the Trans-Siberian route. He was sitting between a newly appointed ambassador and a prince-ling from a house which once reigned over a few square miles—knowing him, I daresay, he felt happy and elated.

I remembered how I had seen him last. It was at the sea-side in Pei-ta-ho. There he wore a bright pink bathing-suit, very wide, so that when the water caught in it, he looked

like a huge pink jelly-fish. A family blessed with many thin daughters used always to bathe at the same time, and the slim and supple little misses swam and played about him, looking in their black bathing-suits like so many tadpoles to whom a big piece of pink meat has been thrown; but none of them has managed to carry off fat Stone Stonehead.

After the princeling and the ambassador had left, he came and sat down at our table, as patronising as ever. He talked about his journey, and mentioned that, in a place which sounded terribly far off, he had met people who came from still further away, and had seen you somewhere—in one of those regions which geographers pretend to know, and about which they love to make all kinds of assertions, as generally nobody is present who could contradict them.

Such a few poor words of news: Somebody has met somebody who has seen you—and on that one must live for a whole while! Like the dames of the Middle Ages in their manors, to whom a passing minstrel brought news many months old of the far-off crusaders!

We naturally asked Stone Stonehead what he thought about the disquieting rumours which Hofer brought from China, and which, during the last days, have been mentioned in some of the papers. He answered that the missionaries had been spoiled by too much protection, and now gave themselves airs, and wanted to dabble in the diplomat's work.

'I never believe missionaries,' he said, 'except when they read the Bible. As to the other news, they have of course been spread by the Russians, who are only waiting for a pretext to grab Manchuria. I've not travelled in vain over all these parts. Agitation? Uprisings? Why, it is all artificially made. I only hope that we'll keep a cool head, and not allow ourselves to be driven into adventures.'

Oh, I do wish that the great Stone Stonehead may be right once in the way! Here nobody thinks of any possible danger.

LETTER XXXII

CHERBOURG, *May* 1900.*On Board the 'Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse.'*

THIS little letter is the last greeting which I can send to you from Europe, for in a few minutes we shall sail on from here over the Atlantic. These are the last lines which will follow the old route to you over Europe, the Red Sea, Colombo, and Singapore. This small white sheet will travel through lands and seas which I know, and I wish it could bring to you a little of the deep blue of the ocean and the rustling of palm leaves, and a glimpse and a breeze of all the many beautiful sights which I ever have beheld in the wide world, and that it would then whisper softly to you that it is I who sent it all, all to you.

My next letter will be mailed in New York; will journey to you by way of Canada, the Pacific, and Japan. From east, from west, from all sides, and encircling the globe, my thoughts fly to you, dear friend.

LETTER XXXIII

May 1900.

On Board the 'Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse.'

WE are already far out on the Atlantic Ocean. During the first hours, while we were yet near the land, the sea was rather rough, but the further we got the calmer it grew. Now the great water extends before us quite smoothly—a pale blue sheet, and just in its stillness so infinite and so strange. For mankind has led for generations a life of such unnatural hurry that restlessness and movement always appear natural and comprehensible to us—absolute repose awes us. We no longer understand it. Our giant ship glides through the blue waves, and we scarcely realise its enormous rapidity, for in its mirror-like smoothness the sea seems to offer no resistance. The blue sky and the blue waters tremble and sparkle as if they dissolved one into the other. It seems as if we could thus glide and float on for all eternity—a small dark speck in the infinite blue. It is a curious dream-like sensation—as if motion-

less, out-stretched wings were carrying me for ever through space.

And in the great blue silence I remember an old legend of the sea.

In quite olden times—about which there exist no books, but only many a queer story which the inhabitants of distant ~~coasts~~ have kept as traditions from their forefathers—in those olden times the sea was always as calm and blue as to-day, a shining mirror in which the sun, moon, and stars reflected much to their own satisfaction, for they considered that they had been well and beautifully made. Nobody then had ever seen a storm at sea; nobody knew what that was. On the mainland already a great many people were living, and as their number augmented, pain, misery, and suffering of all kind increased too. In their struggles and anguish the people often looked longingly towards the ever-quiet, smooth sea. At last their unhappiness grew so much, and their desire to escape from it became so intense, that they said, ‘We can bear it no longer. Let us sail over the beautiful blue water, and perhaps we shall find

happiness out there.' Then they built a big ship, and called it *Sea of Joy*, and with it they sailed out on the clear blue sea. But the *Sea of Joy* was a *World of Woe*. Together with men, pain, misery, and suffering of all kinds had embarked on the ship, and it got so heavy through their weight that even the strong sea could not carry it, and after the *Sea of Joy* had sailed out a little way, she sank, and the blue waves closed over all the world's woe.

But deep down in the bottom of the sea, something now began to toss and turn, and those people who had remained on shore saw with wonder that the ever-equal sea began to change. It became restless, its deep blue turned to a dismal grey, and gigantic waves rose and broke thunderingly against the coast. White foam flew over their abysses. The sea fought and roared and raged in wild anger. It had become like the peaceless men themselves—and they understood the sea, for they recognised in it all their own passions.

Since then there have always been storms at sea, and ever anew the sea fights with all the strange woe sunk on its bottom. It fights

to regain the old lost peace, but that will never come back. Even on the most quiet, clear days, a weary, troubled sighing seems to arise from the blue depths.

P.S.—New York. The whole way out was calm and smooth—like a soothing pause in the midst of life, a six days' parenthesis. Like music, the voice of great rolling waves lulls to sleep many an old pain. Music and long voyages are what we poor modern people need, for they calm us and teach us to forget.

Whilst the ship was gliding ever onward, I had the growing impression that something horrible, which since a long time had held me in bondage, was at last and for ever remaining behind me. To how many others has this journey across the Atlantic already been a flight from the past? I also had that sensation of flying and of throwing off a weight. As I awoke this morning in my cabin, I felt as if walls and chains had fallen down. And there she stood on her rock, the gigantic Liberty, who with her light seems to beckon and to give hope to the weary and over-

burdened of all countries! To put up Liberty as a symbol of a whole continent, and as a welcome to all—that only America could do!

LETTER XXXIV

TUXEDO PARK, *May* 1900.

AFTER we had landed at New York we got a kind note from Mr. Bridgewater asking us to spend a few days here at his house. I still felt so weary and exhausted after all I went through during the last weeks, that I gladly accepted the invitation to pick up a little strength in the country. Country life, however, as I remember it from my childhood, does not exist here, and the Tuxedians would be greatly astonished at the loneliness of North German estates, lying many miles one from the other, and only connected by country roads which during autumn and spring weather hinder intercourse more than they further it. Tuxedo Park once more proves to me that the Americans thoroughly understand exclusiveness, but scarcely appreciate solitude. They require plenty of other people and acquaintances—of

course, only carefully chosen ones, who in every respect are socially desirable. In this need of society and dread of being alone they are not unlike children. The Park of Tuxedo extends around a lake, and on its wooded hills and slopes stand many pretty country-houses, Swiss cottages with carved wooden balconies, massive stone buildings with broad Southern-looking verandahs, small manor-like castles which try to appear ancient. All these country-seats are crowded closely together, the different gardens leading one into the other and forming all together the great park. Beautifully kept roads connect the houses, and they are being constantly used by people who drive or walk, and who all go one to the other in their characteristic craving for as many social gatherings as possible. Most of these houses are fitted with a degree of practical comfort and luxury entirely unknown to the average German country-house, but to each of these homes of plenty we Europeans add without imagination a large estate of fields and meadows as the necessary basis and accompaniment of so much wealth, instead of which the different

houses are only separated by a few minutes' walk.

Near the lake the club-house stands. It has a big ball-room, a reading-room, and contrivances for every kind of sport. In the afternoons the whole society meets there. It is an association of families which have founded here in the former hunting-grounds of the Indians a colony of rich people. During weekdays the feminine element predominates as in most country resorts near New York, but the Saturday afternoon trains bring a lot of gentlemen, proprietors and guests, who remain till Monday to rest from the great exertion of making money. I never know what is the exact profession of American men; I only know that they all make money. They appear to me like mysterious beings who possess a conjuring formula by which they know how to draw money from all corners, just as in India the jugglers by their weird chanting called forth cobras from odd, unexpected places.

But the charm of America is its women, who always know how to set aside their own worries and make a profession of being ami-

able. Perhaps they would be even more delightful if they were not in a perpetual hurry, as if afraid of missing something.

There are some nice women here of contagious cheerfulness, and I don't know if it is their influence or rather the full, warm spring, but I really feel sometimes as if I were just awakening out of a strange narcotised condition. Thus the little dormice must feel when they stretch and yawn after their long winter sleep, and their small blinking eyes become conscious that the beautiful world is there once more. Then such an awakening little dormouse surely also calls out 'Good-morning, dear friend.'

LETTER XXXV

TUXEDO PARK, *May* 1900.

MR. BRIDGEWATER'S house here in Tuxedo is even nicer than his town-house. There is something homelike about it. It reminds me of old Hessian country-places with its roughly hewn stone foundations rising to the first story, whilst above that the walls are whitewashed,

with the beams of the wooden work standing out in their natural tints of deep, rich brown. The roofs are far projecting and some windows are surmounted by high gables. Old rococo angels of grey stone have been put up on one of the balconies, and one sees at once that all the ornaments of the house have been collected with loving care on long journeys, from the Spanish inlaid wainscoting of the dining-room to the wrought-iron railings of the staircase.

The tower that stands out boldly in the principal courtyard is decorated on one side with stone relief work, which was taken from an old Bavarian peasant house and which represents St. George, the dragon-slayer. If to-day a dragon legend were to be written, it would have to be quite different from that old tale of handsome chivalrous George, who only went out to free the world from the wicked monster. To-day many puny gnomes sally forth against the dragon, whose home is far-away Cathay, but they don't want to kill it, they merely intend getting fat on it. The modern St. George chains the dragon so that

it should remain quiet and allow itself to be milked.

The south side of the tower still looks somewhat empty, and Mr. Bridgewater intends putting up a clock there. He asked me if I could not make a design which might be painted on the wall around the clock, as you often see in old Bavarian houses. So I have made a sketch of a golden twelve-rayed sun with the clock in the centre. The rays correspond to the hours, and in each of the golden points a word is painted in Gothic letters. Here they are as they stand in succession: I. we begin, II. we want, III. we learn, IV. we obey, V. we love, VI. we hope, VII. we search, VIII. we suffer, IX. we wait, X. we forgive, XI. we resign, XII. we end. The advancing handle marks the hour and its word, and there is many a one we should like to pass by quickly, so as to tarry longer at others—but we must accept all the hours, the good and the bad ones as they follow each other on life's inexorable great clock.

What signs may there be standing over the hours of your future, dear friend? I often

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wonder about it, and I should like to lift the veil just a little, but again I think that it is better not to question and to search, but rather to enjoy the present spring hour, like the swarms of infinitesimal insects which dance above the lake in the sunshine. I wish that many, many, and only happy hours may be waiting for you, and this wish of mine is to be carried to you by the golden sunrays when they disappear to-night before my gaze, to go and shine for you on the other side of our glorious spring-world.

LETTER XXXVI

TUXEDO PARK, *May* 1900.

THE days spent here have done me so much good that I feel loath to leave and to wander onward again. I have a vague foreboding as if after the rest in this quiet harbour, troubled seas were awaiting me outside. But this dread of life, that sometimes creeps over me like a shiver, must be the result of nerves still overstrung and of the weariness that remains after we have carried heavy loads. I feel like one

suddenly awakened who trembles and does not know whither to turn; yet sometimes during the last days it seemed as if I could hear many little voices softly whispering that with every new spring 'the world becomes beautiful again.' That is the opinion of the swallows flitting through the air, and of the feathery, white clouds drifting on the blue sky, and of the thousands of small insects and millions of dust-specks dancing in the rays of the sun. The black cat basking in the sunshine purrs full of absolute satisfaction with the present and of confidence in the future. It seems as if joy had suddenly become the common lot. And happiest among the happy Madame Baltykoff and Anstruther appear to be. They are also staying here on a visit, and really they had no need to tell me anything about it, for I only had to look at them. Madame Baltykoff has studied America most thoroughly, and the result has been that of all the products of this great continent, this one American appears to her the best and most worthy to be lastingly kept. She has grown less agitated; perhaps she only needed the

proper anchoring-ground like many a small tossed-about craft, and she has now found it. Anstruther explained to me that Madame Baltykoff is far superior to him in every respect (this belongs to every nice American's creed about women, even about his own wife), only in his nationality he declared to possess a great advantage over her, and that he offers to share with her. 'According to all her opinions,' he said, 'she ought to be a free American.' Mr. Bridgewater says that this engagement is a step towards the Americanisation of the world by social means, and this Americanisation he considers to be the task of the opening century.

The only drawback in the general rejoicing is that Anstruther's name will have to disappear from the Club of the Forty Most Clever Men. No married members are allowed. Isn't it humiliating that in a country so well known for its courtesy to women, one should yet have come to the conclusion that marriage acts as a damper to the spirits?

LETTER XXXVII

NEW YORK, *May* 1900.

WE have left Tuxedo Park, and here in our New York rooms, where nothing has changed, and in the midst of all the well-known things that accompany me since so long, I have soon felt quite at home again, almost as if I had not been away at all, and as if the last weeks had never been. When I wake up in the morning I must first try to remember if it is all true, the sudden journey to Europe, all that I went through there, and our hurried return to America. Sometimes it all seems like a dream, as if I had fallen into a deep sleep from which I have just awakened to find everything unchanged and exactly as it has been for many a year. But then I suddenly realise that everything is indeed changed. I look about for the old well-known hopelessness. It is gone. I don't see my way clearly at all. I don't even try to. I let myself drift without thinking, without a will, and I don't know where I am going, but sometimes I seem

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to see a small light shining in far distance. Since the earliest days of my youth I have not had such a quiet contented time, nor felt so free from suffering as if all restless wishing had been lulled to sleep. A spell seems to rest on the enchanted world. A thousand little silver bells sound softly from afar. Sometimes I scarce dare to breathe. Oh, that naught may disturb this wonderful hour; that is my one and constant prayer as I listen with reverent wonder to the gentle ringing of bells which seems to rise from the depth of my own heart, a faint and timid and yet hopeful sound.

Dear friend, I believe I am living in a fairy tale!

LETTER XXXVIII

NEW YORK, *June* 1900.

SINCE a few days the papers bring disquieting telegrams from Peking, and it was a relief to hear yesterday that the foreign ministers had asked for Legation guards and that they had arrived safely, after the usual procrastinating

palaver of the Tsungli Yamen, but without any serious efforts being made to hinder them. It reads like an exact repetition of what we saw in '98. But we were destined to hear more yesterday about China than what the papers said. In the evening my brother and I went to dine at Sherry's. Now that town gets daily more empty, there is not the same crowd there as in winter, but still one sees enough clean-shaven men in evening dress with gardenias in the buttonhole, and enough ladies wearing smart gowns and large picture hats, to fancy that one has just stepped into a living picture-book of Gibson's.

After we had just sat down, several gentlemen walked up to the reserved table next to ours, and you can judge of our surprise when we discovered amongst them two friends from China—and such contrasts, too, they were: the Ruby Mines contractor, Bartolo, and Dr. Silberstein, that clever journalist, whom you considered as one of the few who utilised their stay in China for a really serious study of the country. Bartolo at once came to greet us, our tables were pushed together, and he then

told us beamingly that he was just back from London, where he had succeeded in forming a syndicate for the Ruby Mines of the Kwantung Province.

‘There’s a perfect rush for our shares,’ he said. ‘The South African War has been our great luck, for all the big capitalists who don’t get a penny from their gold shares all this time, have eagerly invested in our enterprise.’

‘And do they really believe that the Ruby Mines can so soon show any returns?’ I asked; and felt ashamed at my childish simplicity in business matters on being laughingly told by Bartolo:

‘Oh no, and really that is not of much consequence for the present. Until now we gain much more by the fluctuation of their prices. Our Ruby Mine shares are just now great speculation papers. Not a spadeful of earth has yet been turned, and yet our one-pound shares are already quoted at 140. It’s grand!’

Then he went on to tell us:

‘Our Rubies, as they are commonly called, are also very much favoured by the English aristocracy. The Duchess of X. wrote to me

just before I sailed, "Dear Bartolo, I'm told that the Rubies are good. I should like to go in for ten shares. Kindly send them. I enclose ten pounds." That old lady, who knows all quotations like any broker, was suddenly pretending to have returned to infantile innocence and not to be aware that ten shares at 140 were worth £1400. Well, I considered the matter for a while, and as the Duchess is a political woman whom I wanted to keep in a good humour, I sent her three shares, returning seven pounds, and I wrote that the Rubies were so much sought after that I had not been able to get her any more.'

Bartolo told us that in Shanghai the finest house on the Bund has been rented for the administration of the Ruby Mines Company, Limited.

'Yes,' he said, 'the thing is to be managed on a broad basis. We are quite convinced of that in London. One large house in Shanghai, another in Peking, no gingerly penny savings on ads., plenty of entertainments, to which we must induce the Chinese to come, and then

after dinner, over coffee and cigarettes, a quick settlement of pending questions. Those are my principles. I shall be worthily assisted by these, my young collaborators.' And Bartolo waved his hand towards two young scions of noble houses, whom he had previously introduced as Marchese del Monte Victorioso and Vicomte le Ruinard. The Marchese del Monte Victorioso, who has loaned this title from his father for trans-oceanic use, is a handsome young man, the happy ~~result~~ of Italian and Anglo-Saxon crossing. Whether his evening dress, which did not succeed in marring that splendid Antinous-like shape, had been paid for; *chi lo sa?* But many of the fair ladies present threw very promising looks at him from under their large picture hats, and I said to myself that youth, beauty, and a title (even if only loaned) represent a capital which brings better profits than all Ruby Mine shares. I can quite fancy Monte Victorioso as the central figure at the Bubbling Well Road Drive, the races, the country club, and all the other social gatherings with which one tries at Shanghai, as well as everywhere else, to hide the empti-

ness of existence. But for business purposes these two companions won't be of much use to Bartolo. However, he seems to derive pure joy out of the mere presence of these titled youths, although they are black, or, at the best, grey sheep, whom he kindly takes for a while off the hands of their respective families.

Le Ruinard is being exported by the wish of his parents to get him away from the influence of an expensive Parisian lady. During dinner he appeared rather downcast until he heard that we had lived a long time in Peking. Then he thawed and asked eagerly for news about the social life of the Chinese capital. I heard him whisper to my brother : '*Et les dames de la cour de Pékin ? Quelque chose à faire ?*'

I am afraid that disappointments of the most varied kind await immigrants to Peking! But the two brilliant attachés of the Ruby Mines Company, Limited, soon withdrew ; they are starting to-morrow for China with Bartolo, *via* San Francisco, and I daresay they wanted to enjoy their last night in full civilisation.

We stayed on a while with Bartolo and

Dr. Silberstein, who is on his way back from Asia, and who intends remaining here some time to prepare an English edition of his book on China. I asked them for their opinion about the disquieting telegrams from Peking. Bartolo declared them to be merely news artificially spread by some stock exchange men to depress the Rubies, so as to buy them at lower prices. But Silberstein took the news very gravely and said they were the first open expression of things which one could see gathering already since some time. 'For months,' he said, 'something seemed to be stirring deep down in the underground of the Chinese world, as if the dragon, who rests in the depth of earth, was awakening and moodily stretching his limbs. Into the seemingly inert masses of the people that surrounded us, life came. For a long while the yellow millions have scarcely been considered as factors that need be considered in any speculations about the future. Now it seems to me as if they were going to throw off their long apathy and were getting ready to strike a great blow.'

‘But, my dear sir,’ Bartolo interrupted him, ‘the Chinese are a contented and most easily manageable people.’

‘So they are,’ answered Silberstein, ‘but discontent has been artificially inculcated in the most resigned of all people. They only wanted to let life glide on with all its imperfections as it had done since the days of the classics. But more and more numerous people came who spoke of change and progress, and who all had some article which they wished to press on the Chinese as quite indispensable for their welfare: religions, weapons, railways, steamships. In the wake of all these innovations Discontent crept into the land. The foreign machinery has caused thousands to tremble for their small livings, but not enough that the living felt menaced; even the dead were to be ousted from their resting-places, for in raising all the new edifices on the foreign settlements, and in tracing the future railway lines it was impossible to heed the innumerable graves scattered all over the country. This appears as the highest sacrilege to all Chinese. They also could not

but see that through the means of their spiritual shepherds the converts to the new faith found strong support in all their worldly difficulties, to the detriment of their heathen brethren. Thus the religiously indifferent people, through entirely worldly reasons, gradually became fanatic, and their political hatred awoke as they became conscious that the foreigners disdainfully looked upon China as a melon ready to be sliced. Since then sects have sprung up for the expulsion of the hated strangers. At first they were only tolerated, but to-day they are openly supported by the authorities.

‘My dear doctor,’ said Bartolo, ‘I’m afraid that the depressing influence of a prolonged sojourn in Peking has turned you, like so many others, into an inveterate pessimist. Our news from China is highly satisfactory. Well, if really the Chinese authorities were to raise some little difficulties, what of that? The proper mixture of showing the first and holding out golden reasons has always yet convinced them, and as to actual danger through Chinese rebels, well, I don’t

suppose you intend discussing that seriously —why, they are a miserable, cowardly rabble! Throw a handful of copper cash into a Chinese crowd and they will forget everything to fight and scramble for them, and before one single European soldier a hundred Chinese bravos will take to flight.'

'Yes, I know,' answered Silberstein; 'that is the modern school's opinion about China. I personally don't share it. I believe we are on the eve of great events which nothing can ward off any more, and they are the logical outcome of our own errors.'

LETTER XXXIX

NEW YORK, 5th June 1900.

THE great Bartolo and his two stylish A.D.C.'s have started. Before leaving they sent me a huge basket full of deep red roses most appropriately tied up with ruby-coloured ribbons; their cards were attached to it in an envelope marked with the motto, *Rubi gagne.*

I had just sat down this morning to describe this to you when I took up the paper and found the startling news that the Huangtsung station on the Peking railway has been burned by the Boxers, and that French and Belgian engineers from the Luhan line have fled to Tientsin, where they arrived after having suffered severely at the hands of the rebels. Missionaries have been murdered in different places with the knowledge of the Mandarins; an attack by the Boxers is expected at Tientsin, and the situation in Peking is said to be grave.

During the last few days the telegrams have been quite reassuring, saying that since the arrival of the Legation guards at Peking everything was quiet there, so that I had forgotten all about Boxers and other realities, and was leading a dreamy, quiet life. This news came quite suddenly, making me feel as if I were roughly shaken out of my sleep.

As I had just finished reading the paper, Miss Tatiana de Gribojedoff came flying into my room. She said that she had only just heard that we were back in New York, and

that I was the very person whom she wanted to see to talk Chinese matters over. She pulled a paper out of her reticule and began reading in a trembling voice the telegrams. She is quite indignant that nothing has been foreseen and nothing done to prevent this outbreak. In all Chinese events she only sees the result of Russian intrigues, to counter-act which the Anglo-Saxons, in her opinion, have been appointed by the Lord. With the severe tone of one who is personally entitled to call to account, she asked, 'I wonder what Salisbury is about?' I could not furnish her with any satisfactory answer to this, but instead I had to give her full particulars about the Chinese localities mentioned in the telegrams.

Besides the morning papers, the reticule also contained a folding map of China. Miss Tatiana spread it on the floor and I had to show her all the places and to answer a thousand questions. I was feeling very anxious and worried myself, but I could not help laughing at Miss Tatiana, who followed all my explanations with wrinkled brows,

and stared at the map with intense seriousness as if the responsibility for a plan of campaign were resting on her. She explained to me that the United States have a great mission in China; that it is their duty to restore order, which evidently has only been disturbed by Russian plotting, and to watch that these events should not be made the pretext for land grabbing.

On leaving, Miss Tatiana announced her intention of stopping in New York until the situation should have cleared, and of coming often to consult us on Chinese affairs.

It is evident that human beings would perish from *ennui* if they had no cares, and therefore Miss Tatiana, who has no real ones, sees fit to create artificial ones for herself in the political domain.

LETTER XL

NEW YORK, 14th June 1900.

FOR several days I have felt as if the whole world were drifting without knowing

whither, and as if some impenetrable and sinister doom were hanging over us, and to-day's telegrams are like the tearing of a veil, as if in a dense fog out at sea a rock suddenly loomed threateningly before us.

'Members of Legations have been attacked in Peking. The English summer Legation has been destroyed. Prince Tuan and other anti-foreign Mandarins have been appointed to the Tsungli Yamen.'

And only those small Legation guards! What can they do if matters really become serious?

Another telegram says that the United States Minister at Peking has wired asking for two thousand soldiers, but when can they get there?

I keep thinking of Hofer. He said that the most important measure was to hold cavalry in readiness, and oh, how right that militant churchman is now proved to have been. He and many other missionaries, and also the Chinese Association in Hong-Kong had warned us in time, and as early as March the Shanghai papers brought im-

pressive articles about the coming of a great danger. It seems as if everybody had feared the approach of some calamity; only excepting those purposely put on the look-out as sentinels.

But all the warning calls died away unheeded. Nobody wished to be disturbed in the convenient optimistic belief that everything was going on satisfactorily, and that our little earth is a nice, comfortable place to live in. Everywhere there was a general desire to avoid complications, and to keep well out of the necessity of taking up a position that might lead to active interference. The world was full of a great yearning for rest. Statesmanship seemed reduced to the one art of avoiding all things which could engender new piles of documents.

And all this was intensified by special circumstances. The Americans say, and quite openly in their papers, that they have no troops to spare for China because they need them in the Philippines. The Boers are just sufficient work for the English to have on their hands. 'Our teeth unfortunately are in

South Africa,' their great man is said to have answered when he was lately being pressed to show his teeth to the Chinese. France is particularly interested that no disturbance should occur in China, for in Exhibition years good-will and merriment are to reign all over the world. Exhibitions are for nations what engagements are for families. On these festive occasions old feuds are buried for a while and everybody pretends suddenly to see reasons for general rejoicing. But those dark, unknown forces that drive us, the inexorable destiny which stands above us, and which allows that to happen which we afterwards call history—they pay no heed to nations' or families' festivities, nor to the weary yearning for repose of aged generations. They lead us irresistibly onward we know not whither—and as in a dense fog at sea there suddenly arise threatening rocks before us.

LETTER XLI

NEW YORK, 17th June 1900.

WITH anxious suspense I was waiting this morning for the papers, and I opened them fully expecting bad news, but not this haunting horror: 'The Legations have been attacked, one of the foreign ministers has been murdered.'

And this news has come nobody knows where from; like all evil tidings spread in the East, they have crept on stealthily as dark rumours, so that one expects even a thousand times more sinister facts behind them. For all telegraphic communication with Peking is cut off. The news trickles through mysterious channels. It is as if behind locked gates a horrible tragedy was being enacted—suddenly we hear groans, blood runs over the doorstep, we don't know what has happened, but we feel that it must be something atrocious and abominable—there—behind that door—we want to help, to force the lock, to smash open the door—and we cannot, and cannot!

It is like the torment of a hideous nightmare.

LETTER XLII

NEW YORK, 19th June 1900.

THE Taku forts have been taken.

That surely must cow the Chinese and bring them to reason! And now surely the relief column, which Admiral Seymour is leading, will soon reach Peking, or perhaps it is there already. Several times its arrival has been announced, and then the news was again retracted.

But how can all those fantastic sounding things we read be possible? That question we ask one another over and over again. There is something unreal and dreamlike about it all, and one struggles to be able to wake up and shake off all the nightly phantoms. When I remember the quiet and monotony of our Peking years, I often say to myself that all this is impossible, and that it can be but the fancy of a maddened brain which nobody believes in.

About how many things did one not hear complaints in China! They ranged from heat,

dust, and mosquitoes to overwork and anger at the Tsungli Yamen's obstinacy and annoyance at the great people at home, to whom China is as a sealed book, and who yet fancy they know everything best. But that danger to our personal safety ever could become a subject of grievance against Providence and the Chinese, that never entered our heads. It would have appeared preposterous to everybody, and all what we hear now sounds absolutely incredible; but when I take up the papers and I see all those telegrams printed in big type, and when I hear everybody talking about nothing but China, then I know that what appears as the most improbable and wildest adventure has come to be true in our days.

We have only known the Chinese as a poor, crushed people. They seemed to submit patiently to oppression and injustice, and also to nature's great devastating catastrophes. Perhaps they look upon it all as the relatively unimportant accompaniment of a greater evil—Life. During centuries they have been raised in a system whose extortions, injustice, and

deceit rest on the eternal laziness and cowardice of the great masses. Every individual there had always some one more powerful above him, whom he had to conciliate, to talk over, or to bribe. The only chance of relief and escape from this enormous weight lay in cunningly outwitting the oppressor. In China, as so often elsewhere too in human relations, the strong enslaves the weaker, and in return is duped by him.

To me the Chinese appeared easily contented, only asking that the few copper coins which they earn daily should not be taken from them by their tormentors; but should this nevertheless happen, they thought best to accept it philosophically, if they lacked the cunning to get round it somehow. Poor people, grown mean and deceitful through oppression! Their natural bent seems to lead them much more towards small subterfuges, subtle misrepresentations, and little treacheries than towards great deeds. Yet now we are told that they all have suddenly turned into frenzied warriors, ready to fight the lords of the earth.

One more enigma in ever enigmatic China!

It also seems strange to be reading now in American papers that these same Chinese, whom we only knew plunged in apathy and blunted by constant misery, are in reality beings of extraordinary nervous disposition, who were excited by fanatics to a wild hatred of foreigners, and hypnotised by them to believe blindly in their own invulnerability and in the perfect certitude of victory. But I cannot help thinking that those hypnotisers exercised their power on the foreigners at Peking more than on any one else, lulling them into a wonderful delusion of safety.

Miss Tatiana comes to see me assiduously, and she delivers long speeches in which she calls the various cabinets to account. Silberstein met her and said afterwards: 'That's a lady who ought to write a volume of Junius letters.'

They discussed Chinese affairs, and Miss Tatiana always repeated the same question, why the Anglo-Saxon statesmen, in whom she has put her faith all her life long, have not foreseen and forestalled any of these events.

Silberstein answered: 'Yes, the news from China is indeed calculated to shake the foundations of one's belief in far-seeing political wisdom. But altogether there is much less planning and guiding in the world's affairs than we are taught to believe at school. The greatest events come unexpectedly. One had allowed oneself to drift without asking whither, and suddenly one stood face to face with surprising facts. The current heroship then consists in extricating oneself cleverly out of difficulties, and in pretending subsequently that everything had been foreseen.'

'But,' said Miss Tatiana, 'this anti-foreign party's hostility to all our American commercial interests ought to have been recognised at once; why was it ever allowed to grow to such an extent?'

'The only way of fighting it effectually,' answered Silberstein, 'would have been to have taken openly the part of the Emperor and his young reformer friends. And there was a moment when it might perhaps have been done. But nobody had the necessary courage, and nobody probably saw how much

was at stake. The decisive hour for China was the *coup d'état* of the Dowager-Empress in September '98. That in those days the whole world looked on, whilst progress, which at last had found fervent adherents, was being annihilated and replaced by the darkest reaction: that is being avenged on us to-day. For however clever it may seem at the moment to avoid all intervention, it is ultimately always avenged if our dread of complications induces us to allow *that* to be crushed which we know to be the higher and nobler part. Whoever speaks to-day of ideal views in politics only meets with a pitying shrug of the shoulders, and yet if one of the Powers had then stood up for the ideal aspirations of the Reform Party, it would probably to-day be the leading one in China, and the unavoidable conflicts which would have been encountered at first could never have been of the magnitude of those whose beginning only we are seeing. The United States might have taken that part, all the more as their hands are clean with regard to China. But to take such resolutions great leading lines of thought are required, and unfortunately the

shop where ideas for statesmen and diplomatists and plots for authors are sold doesn't exist yet.'

LETTER XLIII

NEW YORK, 21st June 1900.

THE horrible dream continues, no news from Peking, and, worse than all, no news from you. Where are you, dear friend? My daily hope is to get a telegram from you saying that you have safely arrived in Shanghai from your great journey into the interior. You ought to be back by this time. What can have detained you. I do so long to hear from you that I feel ill with suspense. The heat weighs like lead on the town. Day and night the air never seems to cool down. The nights are the worst. They appear so endless with all their troubled thoughts and feverish dozing, their vague terrifying visions. The heat then gets to be a tangible being; in the dark I can feel it weighing on me like a nightmare's monster. I fancy that I can touch and seize it. The papers say, as they do

every year, that this is an abnormal summer; never have men and beasts suffered so much from the heat, never have there been so many sunstrokes. It would seem as if people derived some sort of consolation from fancying that their sufferings are exceptionally great, so great that they attain a certain significance. But in reality nothing signifies. Suffering only then appears exceptionally great to us, when it happens to be our own. Could we widen the conception of our personality, thus embracing more misery, we should again consider these new torments, which till then were unknown to us, as exceptionally great.

If in millions of years the dead world revolves, an ice-covered ball, through endless space, what will the small beings matter then who once upon a time died on it of heat?

The town is quite empty. We are still here, and I should not like to go away, for just in this terrible heat I sometimes fancy to be where all my thoughts are—behind the high town-walls of Peking. The heat alone there at this time of year, and without anything else—what martyrdom! I should like to take my

share of it, to help carry the burden. How beautiful it would be if we could carry for others, if one could say, 'Rest, for now I will put my shoulder under the load.' But the woe of the world is not like a load of a certain size; the more that eat of it the smaller each share gets. No, it grows with every new guest, it is always in abundance on the table, even if ever new millions sit down to it. To help to bear? That is but one of the many illusions with which the great hopelessness is to be hidden. Every one bears what lay already in his cradle and grew with him; he bears it because it cannot be helped. And before, beside, and behind him there are rows and rows of other poor beings who all are bearing their own burden.

Nobody can relieve another of his yoke so that he shall truly breathe freely: we can only add to our own trouble the thought of the other's—we can but suffer with him.

Oh, how I suffer here with all those whom I left in Peking! How I do suffer with you, dear friend! My thoughts are for ever searching for you, sometimes behind the gloomy

walls of Peking, which surround with their sinister silence the fate of so many; sometimes in great, mysterious China, from whose different parts constant news of revolts and massacres is reaching us.

And yet, with all my pity and suffering, I cannot help you in any way!

LETTER XLIV

NEW YORK, *22nd June 1900.*

DEAR FRIEND,—In these times of growing care and anxiety I think so constantly of Peking and of all that may be happening there, that I often fancy to be in the midst of it myself, and I scarce know where I am in reality. If any one speaks to me, I start up as if I had been shaken out of a dream, and I must make an effort to remember the surrounding world. For hours and hours I lie awake at night, and, by the utmost force of will, I try to raise the impenetrable curtain which separates us, and I listen breathlessly if no voice will ever come to me through

the deep stillness to bring me tidings. Then every morning there is the same feverish waiting until the papers arrive, the same absolute belief that to-day they must contain the blessed news; and then the bitter disappointment, the vanishing of hope—ever the same sinister silence.

Pictures of our Peking life are gliding past my eyes, and I try to retain all ever so small remembrances of those long gone days—for they are my own treasure—the only thing perhaps that is left to me. As if the dust were wiped from an old faded painting and its colours again appeared bright, thus a thousand forgotten details come crowding back into my memory. Day by day the tale of the years, in which we have met and known each other, unrolls itself before me, and constantly I see you looking at me from out of the depths of the past.

On first seeing some people I have had the vague impression of having known them formerly, although I was absolutely sure of meeting them for the first time in this life. Where, when could I have passed them? What

was it that had once united us, the memory of which distant time now faintly spoke?

Never have I had this sensation so intensely, dear friend, as on the day when I first saw you.

Do you remember?

It was at a dinner-party in Peking in the house of the Minister of ———, one of the last representatives of that old political school which still believed in the invincible power of China, and whose adherents, by treating this Asiatic conglomeration as an equal Great Power, found a satisfaction for their own personal diplomatic vanity.

I remember that when my brother and I entered, most guests had already assembled. Our host was just explaining to a newly arrived colleague the intricate question of the audiences of foreign representatives. It was a subject which he particularly liked, and he was relating pathetically how the Emperor of China had been forced to grant ever new concessions to the strangers in the ceremonial of receiving them. This minister was very proud of being accredited to a court

—a trait occasionally to be found in republicans—and he took it as a personal offence if this, his own special court, was not estimated as a full-fledged one. I met him once after one of those audiences, and he proudly said: 'I have just been in the presence of Royalty.'

A staff of young interpreters surrounded the old minister, and, by their help, the foreigners conveyed a few phrases to an ancient, fossilised-looking member of the Tsungli Yamen, who was amongst the guests, and who did not know a word of any European language. Two young Chinese also were present, smartly dressed in long, flowing silk robes, delicately tinted jackets, and black skullcaps, with a big white pearl over the middle of the brow. Evidently Peking swells! They were introduced to me as 'Marquis Tshiao Feng Lo and brother,' who were said to speak English. I addressed the older looking as Marquis, but he answered, 'My brother, he be Marquis, me be plain Esquire.' In the most startling pidgin-English the two brothers then explained to me that the elder one was but an adopted

child of the former Marquis Tshiao, and whilst they were still trying to make me understand the intricate question of adoption in China, our host walked up to me.

You were following him.

He introduced you.

And as I looked up at you, I had the distinct impression of having known you formerly, although I knew with absolute certainty that I was seeing you for the first time.

It was a very strange sensation. I felt as if I were standing before the gate which shuts us off from the knowledge of what we once have been, prior to these short, earthly years for which our weak memory is barely sufficient; and with the utmost exertion of all my faculties of thought and remembrance I was trying to push ajar this gate for an instant.

At dinner we were seated far apart, but when I bent forward a little I could see you at the other end of the table. And I kept asking myself, 'When? Where?' In the buzz of general conversation I caught several times the sound of your voice, and it seemed strangely familiar, as if I had heard it for years.

After dinner we spoke a long time together, and with every minute that odd feeling of old acquaintance and familiarity grew upon me, and I thought I could read in your eyes, too, an expression of wondering recognition.

Since our arrival in Peking I had, of course, been hearing a great deal about you, about your strange and adventurous journeys into China, scarcely ever explored by Europeans; about your wonderful collections and your friendships with Lamas of remote convents who never would have spoken with any other white man, but who, on account of your deep Buddhistic researches, counted you almost as one of themselves. I had naturally been very eager to know you, but what I felt on at last meeting you had nothing to do with what I had heard about the circumstances of your present life; the roots of this feeling of recognition seemed to reach back into the grey distance of long forgotten times.

On our way home, whilst the two-wheeled blue cart tossed about on the rough road like a ship at sea, and the mule could only by the utmost efforts drag it out of the deep holes,

and later on in my little room of the Hôtel de Pékin I kept asking myself, 'When? Where?'

But on that night I found no answer.

LETTER XLV

NEW YORK, 23rd June 1900.

TO-DAY I write to tell you how I found the answer!

Write to you? And I don't even know where you are, nor if this letter will ever lie before you. I don't know if any future will yet be ours, or if the whole rest of life must be but a weary remembering of days that are gone.

And yet I feel sometimes as if your thoughts surrounded me, as if you were listening somewhere in far distance for a word from me. I will send out this little tale to search for you in wide space; half forgotten, it has lain hidden, yet now I feel that all the time the hope was there of whispering it once to you on the evening of some future golden summer day.

It was on the morning after the old minister's dinner-party. On her thick felt soles my *amah*

came noiselessly into my room. Her black hair was tightly pulled back and twisted into a kind of horn at the back of her head. She invariably wore indigo blue cotton coats; with the growing cold in winter she used to put one blue wadded garment on the top of the other, till she looked like a barrel, and her arms stood out like fat, blue sausages; but in summer, when all her thick winter dresses were resting in some pawnshop, she appeared quite slim. My *amah* was a Christian, and had been brought up by the French nuns in the Petang school. There she had picked up some French words, and this facilitated intercourse with her, if once you had agreed about the meaning she gave the words.

On that morning the *amah* looked beaming, and she said:

'*Joli Monsieur* has sent a present for *Madame*.' Whoever sent a present was *joli*, according to the *amah's* French; she evidently judged that handsome is as handsome does. In her slender, yellowish hands she was carrying a green jade bowl filled with pink magnolia blossoms.

Between the flowers your card was lying.

I bent over the magnolias, and as I inhaled their sweet scent a strange sensation crept over me, as if I had already once lived through this very same scene. I seemed to be dreaming, and I felt as if some invisible, mysterious power were standing behind me, compelling me to act as I now did. Mechanically I took one of the brown branches, on which two beautiful pink blossoms were opening between their small velvety sepals. Mechanically I walked up to the dull and cracked looking-glass, and obeying the strange foreign will-power that led me, I held the flowers above me, twisted a plait of my hair between them, and thus fastened them on my head.

But in the instant when I had done this and bent forward to see better in the looking-glass, the walls of the small hotel-room, the furniture, the *amah*, and everything that a second before had been standing there, suddenly vanished. I myself had disappeared—and yet I could see.

I saw a wide expanse of smooth blue sea, reflecting infinite spaces of cloudless sky.

Sometimes the glistening sheet of water seemed to heave, as if the sea were sighing in a dream ; then a small wave would run along the sparkling, golden sand-beach, and sink back again into the calm, eternal blue. Two figures were sitting on the shore. They both were tall and strong, and their garments were made of some soft fur ; their fair locks hung down over their shoulders, and their eyes were blue and clear and as unfathomable as the deep sea stretching out before them. They seemed surrounded by a halo of youth and early dawn's light and world's beginning. The man bent down towards the water, and stretching his hand out, he seized a large, open, pink shell, which a wave was softly washing towards the shore. He held it out to his companion. She took it, lifted it high above herself, and twisting a lock of her hair between the two iridescent halves of the glistening pink shell, she fastened it on her head. Then she turned smilingly towards the man ; but his face had suddenly taken your traits, and the picture of the woman which his eyes reflected—was my own.

I bent forward to see more—but the vision disappeared—the blue sea turned grey and blurred—the two figures vanished.

I was standing again in the shabby Peking hotel-room; the small cracked looking-glass hung on the wall opposite, and the *amah* was looking at me as if nothing had happened.

But my question, 'When? Where?' had been answered.

In primeval times we both must once have sat on a sunny, golden beach—and perhaps I was the being in whom the wish first arose to look beautiful in the eyes of another.

The green jade bowl, which you sent me with the magnolia flowers, never has left me since. To-day, also, it is standing before me, and I gaze at the strange characters chiselled into the hard, green stone, which say, 'What has once been on the eternal wheel of things must for ever return.'

Weird memories of the past, trembling forebodings of the future, creep over me and make me shudder. For we grope about in the dark until we vanish in absolute night—we know not whence we came nor whither we are going.

LETTER XLVI

NEW YORK, 24th June 1900.

ALWAYS the same contradictory news in the papers. The descriptions of horrible massacres, and at the same time the assurances of Chinese Ministers abroad that the foreigners in Peking are still alive, and that one of the so-called Chinese generals is trying to protect them. What is one to believe? Alas, we always believe to the very last what our heart wishes most.

I have begun reading my Peking diary. On each page I find your name, dear friend, and the mention of some surprise and pleasure which you had thought of for me. In those days I accepted it all without much thinking—as if it could not be otherwise—but now, on reading it all, it seems as if distant voices arose out of the old leaves, telling me softly about things which I only vaguely knew. Now I understand—now, when perhaps . . . But I will not think of that agonising horror. It is impossible that it should end thus

Besides, there is not the slightest fact to make me think that you are imprisoned in Peking—only that it is time you should be back from your journey. But how often do such tours into the interior last much longer than one first had thought, and when you heard on your way of the revolts, you surely will have found means of escape. You had so many friends among the natives, and you always appeared to me as the one foreigner who really was in touch with the Chinese world. You, who were personally acquainted with palace employees, censors, masters of guilds, and literati, whilst many of the other Europeans seemed to pride themselves on knowing as little as possible about the children of the land. And it comforts me now to remember that you also had friends among the Mongols, who come every autumn to Peking in large caravans, and amongst the dealers who wander through the remotest provinces, and hunt up celebrated old vases for rich collectors. From all these people you used to receive tidings of things which remained for ever hidden to other strangers, and you surely

noticed beforehand the great work of undermining and agitation, which must have preceded these recent events which surprise us like sudden revelations. Surely you were warned in time, for you are probably the only foreigner knowing China so well that you could dive into the seething masses of its people without leaving a trace—'The Strickland of China,' some Kipling enthusiasts once called you. If any one, you surely must have been saved!

But why don't I hear a syllable from you? Oh, this perpetual brooding and yearning—the desire to know, and at the same time the dread of knowing.

Constantly my thoughts drift back to those years that are past. Once more I see before me our little Peking house, which you helped us to arrange and furnish. Surrounded by walls, it stood in the street behind the Legations, near the Hatamen, where there are some big old trees, and where a temple is said formerly to have been. I remember the small courtyard with the huge weather-stained stone turtle, the Chinese symbol of immortality, and

I remember the wisteria with its lilac flower-grapes twining around a gnarled old trunk, and trailing over the grey roof. How many evenings we spent sitting there. The wind was playing in the branches. Softly the pale flowers dropped down on us. A belated bee flew humming through the yard. From beyond the walls the strange evening calls of vendors passing through the grey streets reached us faintly—sounds from a world whose small external sounds we gradually learned to distinguish, but whose genius and inner life will for ever remain dark and mysterious to us. And in such hours the consciousness of infinite distance came to be oppressive like a dead-weight, like the dreamy feeling of being lost in space, cut off by infinity from all that had once been our world.

What may have happened to our little house, and what has become of the little group of white men and women whom we knew there, who lived blindly secure in the midst of a foreign hostile world? It seems as if they had all been spirited away, vanishing into a night

which we cannot fathom. I see them all before me as they had assembled in our small yard on the morning of our departure to bid us farewell. The house looked dreary and empty. Ta was ordering about the coolies who carried away the last trunks and boxes. We sat about on the door-steps and on the back of the old stone turtle, and there was a hubbub of many languages. Good-byes were said and rendezvous arranged for the Paris Exhibition. '*Au revoir! Auf Wiedersehen.*' The words for ever ring in my ears; how often did we not all repeat them on that morning, feeling no misgivings! And at the same time the crackers, which the Chinese burn at every departure to drive away the evil spirits, were exploding with mad noise. But the evil spirits even then filled the whole land, and, lurking invisible, were biding their time, and none of those who stood there felt their presence. For fate ever strikes blind whom it is willed to destroy.

And you, who were perhaps the only one to guess and see—where are you, dear friend? That is the most unbearable thought of all

and I imagine you surrounded by ever new dangers!

When shall we know? . . . or . . . Shall we never know?

LETTER XLVII

NEW YORK, *25th June* 1900.

My diary is my one consolation. I lose myself in it, living once more through the past and forgetting for a while the tormenting present. I can understand old people when they speak about the great joy of meeting people who knew them when they were young. My diary is somebody who has known me for a long time and in whom I find my own self again. And more than that, it is somebody who has known you, and I linger long over those pages in which I find something about you.

To-day I have been reading about a morning on which you came to fetch me to take me to shops in the Chinese town to help me with some purchases for our little house. My diary

contains only a few words, but they brought it all back vividly. I wonder if you too still remember it?

It was winter.

We passed through the heavy frowning gateway of the Tartar town and then crossed the Beggars' Bridge, edging our way between the long rows of camels, the throng of recklessly driven blue carts and a crowd of strange-looking human beings: Mongols in broad-brimmed fur caps and thick ochre or copper-coloured coats; Chinamen shivering under their many wadded garments, their hands hidden under long sleeves, and wearing on their heads pointed red bashliks tied tightly round the throat. Others had their ears covered by small fur cases; one could call out loudly to them, but they did not hear anything, and were constantly being knocked against by carts and riders. Those were the well-to-do who could afford to protect themselves against the cold. But on the Beggars' Bridge gruesome figures were crowding between the small stalls and open cook-shops. Some were half-naked, and the fleshless bodies

were trembling with cold. We saw haggard faces, blue lips, purplish half-frozen limbs, eyes staring as in madness, hideous sores, wild heads on whom the hair formed a tangled, felt-like mass. Scarcely could these creatures be called human beings in their filth and abject degeneracy. And many were quite young. Children who somewhere had a mother! And the misery of these many lives, which had better never been lived, was so horrible because one saw so clearly its utter hopelessness. Surrounded by the beggars, we stopped in front of one of the mean eating-houses, where nameless queer-smelling food was sold in ancient cracked and broken porcelain bowls, which had been ingeniously mended with wire. The beggars looked ravenously at the big pan by the open fire, in which offal, shaped into balls, was fried in scalding grease. The hot bluish vapour rose up into the cold winter air, and the poor greedily drew in the smell of burning fat and crowded closely round the fire. In their life's Hell a warm meal near the fire of the cook-shop appeared as the highest luxury life can offer! You

ordered food for them all, and remained to see that they got it. All the beggars of Peking were your special protégés. How often have I not seen you surrounded by that strangest of all crowds which we used to call your guard!

I asked you about some of the most strikingly awful figures; you knew them all and said: 'Even amongst these poor outlaws, who seem deprived of all human rights, there still exist subjects for legal contests, for each one is allowed to beg for alms only in certain streets. They form a guild, at the head of which an imperial prince stands to whom they must deliver a yearly tribute—for nothing on earth is more ruthlessly exploited than misery which cannot defend itself.'

From the Beggars' Bridge we turned to the right into one of the small streets. I don't know if it came from the spectacle of all the wretchedness we had seen, but I remember that we talked about the small amount of happiness to be found on earth, and that I said: 'And the little which there is, we never seem able to look straight in the face. We

always see happiness in profile, looking back into the past or away into the future.'

Then you murmured under your breath, 'Would it really not be possible for once to look happiness boldly in the face?'

The sound of your voice seemed to have suddenly grown strange to me. It trembled as if you could scarcely breathe in the icy air.

Your low words contained a question.

But I dared not answer—I feared the trembling of my own voice.

I only shook my head in silence.

The wind came tearing round the street corners. It cut like a cruel weapon. The ground was hard frozen. The winter sky was hanging low, heavily laden with snow. It seemed as if some ancient evil were brooding over the whole world. Shivering, I suddenly became conscious of the intense cold. As if flying before ghosts, we both hurried onward.

Neither of us spoke any more.

LETTER XLVIII

NEW YORK, 26th June 1900.

A FEW days ago we read that Hofer on his way back from Europe had reached Shanghai—Hofer, whose warnings nobody in Europe believed. I telegraphed to him, asking if he knew where you were, for I could not bear the suspense any longer. And I have just received his answer: 'According to latest news he must have reached Peking immediately before beginning of siege.'

And so there is not even the small hope that you might be in some safe hiding-place in the interior of China! I had clung to this belief during the last days. The more alarming the news about Peking grew, the more I took it for granted that you could not be there. I tried to convince myself that it was out of the question. I would not admit the mere possibility.

And now you are there after all! All the gruesome tidings which we read day by day with growing horror, have become living realities, have turned into pictures that per-

petually haunt me, since I know that you are imprisoned in that town of many sufferings. Every single being waiting for relief behind those grim walls must inspire pity even to the veriest strangers—but what is that in comparison to the agonised despair which tears my heart thinking of you—of you!

And not to be able to do anything when I would so gladly give my own life; when it would be bliss at least to share your suffering! And in the midst of this torture I suddenly stand still as in awe before my own heart's revelation, asking in bewildered wonder: 'Can this be? Can it really be I?'

LETTER XLIX

NEW YORK, *27th June* 1900.

SINCE when did I know what you have come to be in my poor life which was blasted in a storm at dawn? Did I divine it already in Peking? Have I only now gradually discovered it? I could not tell. It seems to me as if it never could have been otherwise.

We never spoke about it—yet now I know that we both have always known it. So much rose between us fettering and separating us. Why then speak? It seems as if a certain shyness prevented us from expressing our deepest feelings. We are much more eloquent with our pens, for we feel more free and alone, as if nobody could hear what we confide silently to the paper.

But Destiny, through the power of outward events has forced me to see clearly into my own self; the anxiety of these days has torn the veil.

When I think of my young years, which ought to be life's happiest ones, I have only the remembrance of a burden which was beyond my strength. But I went on carrying it because I could not help it, for I was not weak in the faculty of enduring, only much too weak and too afraid of publicity to take my destiny into my hands and shape it according to my own wishes. I bore it as it was.

I have known some women of the *Uebermensch* type, who simply threw off whatever

hindered them in the free development of their own personality, which was the idol before which all had to give way—who were strong enough to bear their own fate. I also have known women who led two distinct lives; one open to the eyes of all the world, cold, grey, and of infinite dreariness, and another hidden existence, one of sweet secrecy, of stolen happiness which had to make up for the emptiness of the other.

I have wondered at both kinds of women, and perhaps have I even envied them a little; but I could not have imitated either of them—it would have been against my own inner nature.

I have waited, as so many women do whose whole life is spent in waiting.

The changes in my life have always come through outward circumstances.

After years, during which golden youth fled, I was partly, and without my own interference, relieved of the all too heavy burden. But it had left its mark upon me. I remained bowed down like a tree which for years has had to bend before the fierce blast of the

north winds. I had lost all buoyancy. Hopelessly I looked around me. What could life yet contain?

Years of wandering followed, bringing outward change, and in me everything grew silent. I took it to be death's silence, which to many comes long before death itself.

I thought that life's struggle was ended, and without aim or wishes I lived on dreaming. The days passed by me like things seen dimly in a fog. I felt nothing but a great weariness like all those who are only waiting for the end.

Thus I arrived in Peking.

Then you came.

How am I to describe what grew to be unsought, and unconsciously, what I never dared touch, what I would not see. We who have suffered much, dread lighting up the obscure corners of our heart. We quickly pass by those hiding-places of old and new sorrows, like children who run fast through a dark room. Life has taught us the fear of the unknown. We know that it mostly means but new woe.

I had grown faint-hearted, and I did not want to see that after all we have gone through, we yet remain the bearers of many possibilities which slumber in us, and only wait for some great force to call them into life.

I deemed that my day was drawing to its close, and it has grown light once more. Is it a kind and warming sun which will shine on the evening, making it more golden than the whole weary day has ever been, or is it the dazzling flash of lightning which tears the dark clouds and once more discloses the devastated land in a lurid glare? I cannot tell. I do not know what heavenly signs stand above us and I cannot lift the future's veil, but the great force which awakens what is hidden and slumbering has come to me with sorrow and anxiety; it presses the pen into my hand and dictates words which would have forever remained unwritten, were it not for that infinite, unceasing anxiety about you—about you.

The force of Destiny, the misery of these days, have taught me to read into my soul. To-day I know what you are to me.

LETTER L

NEW YORK, 29th June 1900.

THE Seymour relief column has returned to Tientsin. It has never reached Peking. All hope that it might after all have got there was in vain. Nothing, nothing is known about the fate of Peking—and I only know that you are there.

It is rumoured that Chinese Viceroys in the southern provinces have received telegrams saying that on the 25th of June the Legations were still holding out. And the whole world submits to this, that the Chinese officials in Shanghai receive regular news about what is going on in Peking, but that the foreigners are not allowed to get a single telegram. Why is not the telegraph Taotai Sheng arrested and told: 'Within four days all governments must receive cipher messages from their representatives or you will lose your head.' That would help quick enough.

But no one ever has dared to act resolutely against big Mandarins.

LETTER LI

NEW YORK, *3rd July* 1900.

TO-DAY a telegram says that a messenger of Sir Robert Hart's has arrived from Peking in Tientsin. He brought a bit of paper dated June 25th, which contains these few words: 'Our position is desperate. The foreigners have all assembled in the British Legation, where they are under constant fire.' Oh, and to know that you are one of them!

Is there any one in the whole world who can feel the same despair as I? And the indignation to find in the same paper which contains this heart-rending cry of distress, subtle discussions of the question whether we are at war with China or not, as well as declarations of that old inhabitant and connoisseur of Peking, Mr. — who writes: 'Prince Tuan cannot possibly have acted as we are being told, for although his manners are gruff, he is honest and good-hearted.' I really believe that there exist even now people who are proud to have known such a Chinese Prince.

Oh, the everlasting snobbery of the world!

LETTER LII

NEW YORK, *6th July* 1900.

THAT horrible news in the papers! A perfect martyrdom it is to read it. The most gruesome details of the foreigners' last fight in Peking, which by some mysterious way have leaked out, are printed in huge type as headings. The sufferings of those unfortunate victims are used for a speculation which reckons on the general greed for all that is sensational; but not only the indifferent see it—also those whom it crushes to the very roots of their being. They see all those ghastly pictures before their inner eyes night and day—night and day. Will nothing ever wipe them out?

And they must also read that the Legations have been given up for lost by the world. It is useless, we are told, to risk any further lives in the attempt to help them, as all must be over anyhow. It is even suggested to abandon Tientsin for the present. In the autumn, when the heat and the rains are over,

a fine punitive expedition, organised on a great scale, is to start for Peking.

What do we care about punishments, we who are trembling for our dearest ones on earth! We want them to be saved!

LETTER LIII

NEW YORK, 12th July 1900.

TWO utter strangers came to see me to-day, an old man and an old woman. They told me that one of their sons had been amongst the besieged at Peking, and that was sufficient for me. The strange people suddenly seemed to be of my own kin. But they invariably said, 'We had a son,' never 'we have. They are quite convinced that all is ended behind the high walls, and that none there is alive any more. They both had the pathetic resignation of old people who have lost one after the other all those whom they loved, until at last sorrow appears to be the only natural thing on earth. The old woman had sewn some new crape on her well-worn black dress, which seemed to have grown threadbare

in a long series of mournings. They had heard somehow that we have been in Peking, and they longed to speak with us and find out if we had perhaps known their son. They did not expect any encouragement. They were quite hopeless. And this was the most awful for me, to see others give up their dearest as irretrievably lost. My own determination to go on hoping against hope suddenly seemed almost childish. All the arguments with which I daily strive to cheer myself up a little showed so pitiably weak.

To-day the papers again say with full conviction that not one of the foreigners in Peking is alive at this hour. The two old people have patiently accepted it. They will go on further through life wearing yet more mourning.—But I cannot—no, my God, I cannot!

And if every one says that all is hopelessly over—if the bells ring for funeral services, I cannot believe it—I will not—I will go on writing to you, because I cannot do otherwise—because it seems to me as if these lines formed the last bridge between us. If I stopped writing to

you I should feel as if I acquiesced in the horrible doom, as if I had given you up: but thus I fancy to hold you and force you to remain, because I still have so much, so very much to tell you. The years we have spent together constantly pass in a long succession of pictures before my mind. I should like to describe each one to you, and every sentence would begin, 'Do you remember?' 'Do you still know?' Oh yes, you do know, you do remember—for those years were to you what they are to me—that for which one has been waiting from the beginning, what one never forgets, what in the last hour will rise before our eyes as the only thing which was worth living for.

LETTER LIV

BAY VIEW, 16th *July* 1900.

DURING these last weeks I have been ill a great deal. It seems as if all strength were gradually leaving me. Every morning I feel that my small stock of power of resistance has again diminished a little. The doctor

said that it came from the heat in town and that sea air would do me good. I know better. The anxiety, which ceases neither day nor night, is wearing me out, and only that which would be a miracle could help me.

But my brother wanted so much to try to do something for me, for whom there is nothing that can be done, that I did as he wished and came with him to this seaside place.

I am so weary, so hopeless. Why should I do anything, or why not do it. What can yet be of any consequence if this one thing was allowed to be. Nothing can matter after that.

But the one thing which I cannot stand is when well-meaning people say to me: 'How glad you must feel not to be in Peking!' or, 'It really seems a divine dispensation that you left a few months previous to these events!'

Oh no, I am not glad to be away! Waking and dreaming I only have the one wish to be in Peking, since I know that you are there. Then at least we should be together—and nothing I might have to suffer would matter if only I were with you. All would seem

easier to bear than this suspense. And if it came to the worst and no relief were possible? Well, even then; for we should not let those savage brutes catch us alive, and in the last look of my eyes you would still read happiness and gratitude, gratitude for life and death, for all that you have given me.

And why should it be a divine dispensation that I am saved, when perhaps many women and children have perished in such a cruel way? They were as innocent as I am of the blind delusion which alone rendered all this horror possible.

To think of all that which innocent beings must have endured in Peking during the last weeks and of all that will yet follow. From all countries ships are sailing towards the Far East; they are filled with men who a few days ago perhaps only knew about China that the men there wear pigtails, and that the women totter about on small feet. These Cossacks and Frenchmen, English and Italians, Germans, Americans, Japanese, and even sons of Hindustan—why and for what are they setting out? In a remote corner of the world they will meet

yellow men, who in their turn never have heard about them ; thousands of miles separated them till now, and they could be neither friends nor foes, for they did not even know of each other's existence. Yet now one will try to kill the other, and that will be called splendid and patriotic.

How devoid of sense it all does seem !

Many who are starting now, young and healthy, will never return, sickness more than bullets will mow them down. Others will return, but how? And all to atone for the wrongs of others!

And when one thinks of the Chinese, of those poor unknown. What heart-rending misery will be endured by them. But there also the real evil-doers will not have to bear it, but those again who cannot defend themselves—that class of human beings whose many thousands of years old sufferings form in all countries a kind of broad basis on which all that is built up by which we pride ourselves to have risen so high.

Those who set out to-day will join that greatest of all fleets which sails in endless

ship-lines towards veiled distance and unknown ports ; a fleet which is as old as human history, whose beginning reaches back into misty primal ages, which has gone on growing ever since the days of the old Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks, and which will never end. It is manned with grey figures of misery, with the numberless, the nameless, who since all times have borne the wrong of the few !

And all is divine dispensation.

LETTER LV

BAY VIEW, 19th July 1900.

WHEN my brother comes back from New York in the afternoon I always go to meet him, hoping every time that he is at last bringing the miraculous news, but every time I see him already from afar shaking his head—no news—no news. Then he asks me how I spent the day, and when I give him daily the same answer, that I have been writing to you, he says no word, but I can see the thought in his eyes, ‘What for?’ But he never contradicts me and lets me do just as I please—as one

does with the hopelessly sick, whom one would fain give some hours of happy delusion.

LETTER LVI

BAY VIEW, 20th July 1900.

MUCH that I thought dead wakes up in these days. Old superstitious practices are remembered which I had discarded during all the time when the world seemed to contain nothing that was worth asking for. I have even fallen back into bargaining with God. How long ago it seems that I have not troubled the old patriarchal merchant prince with the long, flowing, silvery beard, but to-day I have entreated him passionately: 'Only let him live, let him be saved, and in exchange I will yield up everything. I will never see him again, never hear his voice, never more hold his hand—but let him live, let him be saved.'

I don't know if my prayer has been heard, and yet it ought to be granted, for it is quite an Old Testament bargain. I offer my life, my happiness, my everything to save another—such contracts, it is said, were made of old!

LETTER LVII

BAY VIEW, 21st July 1900.

YESTERDAY we still read a horrible description of the end of all foreigners in Peking, and to-day Wu Ting Fang has brought to the Foreign Office in Washington a cipher telegram from the United States Minister at Peking.

It is printed in all the papers: 'In British Legation under continual shot and shell from Chinese troops. Quick relief alone can prevent general massacre.'

Since several days Wu has been promising to establish direct communication with Mr. Conger, and nobody believed him. This talkative busybody resembled too much *la mouche du coche* in the fable; but never mind whatever else he may have invented in his flowery *babu* English, if only this one tidings is true, for it is the first ray of hope again given us. It is a very faint one indeed—but still we may hope again. Scarcely credible does it sound, but the poor brave people are really still holding out—and they must be saved—they must.

I should like to beseech the whole world for pity's sake to make haste that they may not perish in the last hour. Think of those unfortunates waiting beyond the grey walls, listening if they can hear the rumbling tread of their approaching liberators. Think also of the unfortunates who in all countries are waiting with yearning hearts for the first sounds of beloved voices which they thought never to hear again.

Make haste—make haste!

LETTER LVIII

BAY VIEW, 28th July 1900.

IT seems almost as if the world would not have it be true! In Europe they now stick to the Peking massacre with the same obstinacy as they formerly believed in the insignificance of the Boxer rising. The rebels were said to be mere riff-raff, armed only with scythes. One downpour of rain would surely disperse them. Now no words are terrible enough to describe them. A few weeks ago guards of thirty men were considered amply sufficient for each Lega-

tion ; to-day sixty thousand men are said to be required for the advance from Tientsin to Peking. The reports coming from Chinese Viceroys, which grow daily more numerous, and which affirm that the foreigners are still alive, is considered as attempts at drawing a new relief column into some horrible ambush. And in the meantime the days are passing, and nothing is being done !

And you all are waiting ! What must you not feel at seeing yourselves thus abandoned by the world, what indignation and despair ?

Oh, the horror, the shame, if relief were to come too late !

LETTER LIX

BAY VIEW, *6th August* 1900.

AT last the dawdling seems to be over. The troops have started from Tientsin, and hourly my thoughts follow them on their march across the land between Tientsin and Peking. Just four years ago I saw it for the first time, with its green Kauliang fields and the brown Pei-ho, on which the big, lumbering boats, set with

huge sails, were slowly gliding and following the river's many windings. In those days the railway did not yet exist. To-day it does not exist any more. We had to travel in house-boats, and I thought those four hot days a long, weary journey, with the monotonous accompaniment of the coolies' rhythmical chant as they pulled the boats along from the muddy banks when the breeze went out, and the halts in the evening when thousands of locusts and crickets would chirp the whole night through. But no presentiment told me that I was even then slowly journeying to meet fate.

Then also I heard for the first time all the names which to-day fill the papers, Ho-hsi-wu, Peitsang, Yang-tsung; and we stopped at those conglomerations of miserable grey huts, which now have become historical places giving their names to battles. Many are they now lying for their last rest in those same down-trodden Kauliang fields, and perhaps they also have started without any presentiment, not knowing towards what goal they were journeying.

LETTER LX

BAY VIEW, 10th August 1900.

SOMETIMES I seem to be hearing your voice quite distinctly. Then I tremble, my breath stops, and I can feel my heart beating in loud, irregular thumps, and I shut my eyes in indescribable joy.

Soon, soon it must be. I shall not heed your words at first. I shall only drink the dear sound. How long ago it is! Do you remember? The last time I heard your voice was on the way from Peking to the station Ma Chia Pu. You were riding beside my sedan-chair, and you bent down in your saddle to talk to me. But we only filled those last minutes with indifferent little phrases, and to-day I know that our hearts were heavy unto bursting, and that one single word might have shattered all our bravely kept up composure—and at last we both were silent for fear of breaking down. Since then, how often have I not remembered those last moments, and fancied to be again sitting in the train waving my hand to you from the window

as we left you standing there at the small station?

But in a few days the horrible suspense and separation must be over. The relief force *must* soon reach Peking. Then you must come to me on the fastest boat, and on the shortest road, for I can bear it no longer.

And what can old Chinese manuscripts matter to you? May they all be destroyed! I give you instead my whole heart to read, and what is written there is old also, but it is not difficult to decipher, and it seems to me such a wonderful discovery.

What is China to you? Let the North be devoured with *vodka*, and the South with beer, and let the younger hungry clamourers also pick up a little meal out of the crumbs that fall from the table of the older and more experienced world-robbers—let them—what does it matter to us? And you will see nothing really great will come of it all. The present indignation and all the great resolutions will just dwindle down; here one can already hear the daily wish to be well out of it. In a few months we shall hear again

the same old talk about the traditions of unalterable friendship for China, and civilisation will again delight in pressing the Dowager Empress's hand, and in the meantime the underground work for another, perhaps more horrible, upheaval will be going on unheeded, for in truth the world is but a sorry scholar, and slow to learn from facts, but quick to forget them. But what does it all matter to us? If only you come back soon. Let it be China for the Chinese, or for any one else, if only China gives you back to me.

LETTER LXI

BAY VIEW, *12th August* 1900.

OLD letters of the besieged now gradually arrive at Tientsin, and all the papers reproduce them in their telegrams. They were brought by messengers, Chinese Christians, who managed to make their escape from Peking through the sluices or dressed up as Boxers. Those short sentences are perfect wails of distress, and they always contain the same entreaty—'Quick, help, or it will otherwise be

too late!' Some of these messages mention for how many days the supplies of food can be made to last—and alas! the time has already expired.

Then there is one number which these letters all contain—that of the dead. Oh, how it grows with each new letter, this number of those for whom all help will come too late. Names are now given, and the terror is ever present—who has already been counted out in that list? Whom will fate yet strike?

It is said here that the relief column can reach Peking on the 14th at the earliest. The whole world is astonished at their quick advance; but to my impatience it seems so slow. Could I but give them wings!

I am filled with such nameless terror and apprehension of these last days and hours!

LETTER LXII

BAY VIEW, 13th August 1900.

TO-NIGHT I woke up fancying that I was back in Peking. In my sleep I must have heard some noise which my dreams converted

into the clicking against each other of two pieces of bamboo with which the Chinese watchmen accompany their rounds. How often have I listened to this sound, faint at first, then stronger, then dying away—tac, tac, tac! During hot midsummer nights, when the mosquitoes were buzzing against the curtain, and the whole earth seemed to exhale the heat which it had been drawing in during the day, that regular sound formed the dull and monotonous accompaniment to all my confused and drowsy thoughts. And in the cold winter nights in Peking when the snow covered the old grey town, the high walls and the infinite space outside, when the whole living world seemed to have vanished into deep stillness, then have I often heard in the great silence this sound, which seemed as an everlasting *leitmotiv*: tac, tac, tac—joy, pain, death; joy, pain, death!

But I particularly remember some spring nights, when I was lying very sick at Peking, and life's spark seemed but a flickering will-o'-the-wisp hovering between me and the great grey unknown, not knowing whether

to stay or to go. The windows were wide open, and from the courtyard the smell of white lilac floated into my room: from my bed I could see into the starry sky. A feeling of great weakness crept over me, and at the same time I felt so free and light, as if I were soaring up quite high into the deep night blue where the stars were beckoning; and from the earth, which was fast vanishing under me, there arose faintly those same ancient words of Destiny: joy, pain, death; joy, pain, death!

To-night in my dreams I have again heard that well-known sound, and it vibrates again and again in my mind, but I can only make out the one word, 'dead, dead, dead.' An indescribable anxiety has taken hold of me, a burning wish to fly to you, and a perfect despair at having to remain here waiting, waiting. I want to help and to save, and then I hear again the word, 'dead, dead, dead.' I am full of infinite yearning and longing for you, and it seems to me as if just to-day I must tell you a thousand endearing words, and shield you, and keep you. But why to-day

this trembling fear, this anxiety which does not leave for a minute, which drives me from the house to the beach and from the beach back to the house, which grows and grows even now whilst I am writing to you? Why to-day when relief must be so close to you? And always the same sound that I heard already in the night—‘tac, tac, tac.’ It pursues me. I *will not* hear it, and yet I must. I hold my ears, then I hear my veins throbbing ‘tac, tac, tac.’ It booms like the ringing of bells, it clicks like fast, regular shooting, ‘tac, tac, tac.’ And I wonder, What is it that this sound so obstinately wants to tell me? I listen and listen. Now it has grown quite weak, as if from some far distance the last beatings of a dying heart came faintly to me . . . dead, dead, dead. . . .

Oh, what is it? What can it mean?

LETTER LXIII

BAY VIEW, 17th August 1900.

AT last! at last! Now it is indeed true! The first telegram from the Legation is

published in the papers. Saved, truly saved! I keep repeating the blessed word. Since I read this news I don't know what I am doing or saying, whether I am laughing or weeping! It seems incredible that for once hope, the ensnarer, was right and despair wrong! And in the joy of my heart, which exults, and then again tremblingly asks, 'Is it true? Is it true?' In the first moments of this newly bestowed life, it seems to me that you are quite near by me and that we are rejoicing together. It is impossible that such ecstasy could fill me without your knowing it. Surely you know it all! I can feel your presence quite distinctly here close to me, although my eyes, dim yet with tears, cannot discern it.

Soon, soon we shall really see each other again! There will come a beautiful summer evening, and we shall sit together on a golden beach, and we shall look out on the endless sea which has fought through days of tempest until it has found peace at last; and such a delight at being again together will fill us, that no language ever found the word for it, that we shall scarcely dare to breathe, that we shall

wish seconds to extend into eternities. Yes, that, all that shall be.

LETTER LXIV

BAY VIEW, 18th August 1900.

As I woke up this morning the sun was shining into my room, and blinking, I had first to get accustomed to this great radiancy. Half-asleep, yet I had the impression that something wonderful was awaiting me. I had that sensation for the last time as a child, when I awoke on Christmas morning and remembered, still in a half-dream, that, in the drawing-room, there were the tree and all the presents of the night before. But not only outside was the sun shining to-day, in my own self everything was glistening with happiness. And to this great radiancy I also had to get accustomed, blinking at first, after a long night of care and anxiety.

The world is glorious, the world is good—for are you not living! What is it that they talk about earth's valley of tears? It is a flowering garden, because you live. All is to

be sorrow and suffering? Oh, I know of such deep ecstasies of joy—for you have been saved. I believe I am only now awakening to the sight of the world as it really is—my world—as I see it. The other people go about as if nothing particular had happened—and yet is all new and different from heretofore. Everything has suddenly got a meaning for me—for you are saved, you live, you *must* live!

I vainly search for words to express what I feel, and I can only repeat what that great master of word and song has said: '*Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond.*' They keep ringing in my ears, those glorious words. I know that some people would smile at this—you in Peking, I here on the Atlantic's shore and Wonnemond? But still these words alone can describe this rapture of joy and this boundless gratitude.

If a God has created mankind, as children have been taught for centuries, then thanks everlasting be to Him who made you. If for eternal ages unconsciously willing minute cells, following some dark necessity, joined so that at last man grew to be, then thanks to the

infinitesimal which formed you. My God's gift—my world's wonder! What do names and creeds matter? All we know is but feeling
—*Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond.*

LETTER LXV

BAY VIEW, 19th August 1900.

AS soon as the first absolutely trustworthy tidings came I telegraphed to you to ask you for news, for I must hear it from yourself that you are saved, I must have my own telegram from you—one word of bliss all to myself in the great concert of joy that is ringing through the world.

Now I wait, oh, how I wait for the first message from you which will reach me after that long, long time.

I will only mail this letter when I shall have received your telegram—for I daresay I shall not have to send it to Peking at all. Surely you will leave at once. What could hinder you when I call you? And I do call you with such longing, that you must hear it,

wherever you are, and through the thickest of Chinese walls.

20th August 1900.

I am so impatient. I can scarcely stand the waiting for your telegram any longer. My brother tries to quiet me by explaining that at present telegrams take much more time than usual to reach Peking. I understand that it cannot be otherwise, and surely many people are waiting just as anxiously as I do, and they also must have patience—and then I nevertheless keep thinking that an exception could be made for this one little telegram to let it pass quickly, for it carries so much happiness that it ought to take precedence over everything else in the world.

21st August 1900.

I feel absolutely certain that I shall get news from you to-day, then I shall immediately mail my letter. It is to tell you . . .

At first the words seemed but an empty

sound. They meant nothing. Only quite slowly have I understood them. The sea still roars and the waves still beat against the shore—just as in the dim time before I had heard the words. He will never more hear the sea's roaring. Do they mean that when they say that he is dead? The letter to him lies unfinished before me. . . . He will never read it. Is that their meaning when they say he is dead? Does it signify that nothing from me can ever reach him any more? That for him the whole world is no more because he is no more? Does it mean that?

I always hear the same words—He is no more. At first I did not understand it, now it is the only thing I remember. Those words fill the world—all else seems to have vanished.

If at least I could have seen him once more! If I had been with him at the last. To think that he was alone then—that he died quite alone. I measure his loneliness by my own intense solitude, his misery by my wretchedness.

During years he has surrounded me with infinite care and kindness. He has loved me—only now do I realise how much—for then I dared not think of it—I had to pass by him—when he was giving me his whole life.

Oh, if there were at least one hour of my life of which I now could say, '*That* I gave to him entirely, that was so wholly his that with his last thoughts he must surely have remembered it.'

Oh that I myself possessed one such remembrance.

But I could be nothing to him. Even in his last hour I was not near him.

He had to die alone.

If at least I had been able to say only once to him, 'I have loved you all the time, and surely, surely you knew it all along—better even than I.' Oh that I were lying by him deep down in the earth.

I see nothing but an endless field covered with ruins—and a road that leads nowhere.—That was my life.

The memories of many former lives seem to

rise up before me, and in all of them he was there and I; and we were always searching one another. But have we ever found? Or was it always only a wondering recognition and then the same doom of separation?

Weary, weary am I, as if I were carrying the burden of endless former suffering. I should like to sleep soundly without dreams and to forget that I ever have been. Oh that there might be a long time of deep rest and oblivion between the moment when we are allowed to go and the time when we shall be forced to return once more on the eternally revolving wheel.

How slowly the hours seem to be creeping in the long, terrible nights of torment, with their perpetual brooding. If it could not have been hindered, would I had remained with him. Now I understand why we were to leave. He wanted to save me, for he surely even then had many forebodings. That was why he pressed my brother to go to New York.

But what are world and life to me without you? And even if you *would* not, you *will*

still for ever draw me after you. Invisible, indissoluble ties chain us together since eternal ages, and I follow you. Often I scarcely know if I am still here; that is my only consolation. Since I am separated from you I only seemed to live here, but in reality I was elsewhere—with you—in that town where we were together during your life and in further lands. Wherever you have been my thoughts have accompanied you. In all your travels they were with you; through my longing I have so completely lived near you that I know places where I yet have never been. With you I have marched through endless plains; by your side I have crossed wild rocky mountain passes; together we have climbed steep peaks, and in the gloom of legendary temples I have stood near you, listening with you to the dark sayings of ancient wisdom. All that was my real life, and there with you was my true self.

Now you have gone further and further yet into the immeasurable distance. But even there I will follow you. In all ages since life and will existed, I must have thus followed

you. And if your road leads through the infinities of space to unknown worlds, to other moons and suns—through deepest night and white hot glare—yet I will follow you. I could not do otherwise.

I fancied I had been lying here for many weeks, but they say it is only a few days. Space and time seem to vanish before me. The minutes contain such endless sorrow, such unbearable yearning that I struggle through them wearily, as if they were eternities. Things of the past seem so near that I stretch out my hand to touch them . . . but the hand itself melts away. . . . The end of my bed sinks into a dim fog. . . . I cannot see myself any more. . . . My body seems to have changed into the whole world . . . and it is throbbing with the whole world's woe.

I can scarcely hold the pen. . . . All gets blurred . . . and all hurts. . . . Always worse and worse. I feel cold. . . . Darkness is creeping over me—I fight against it—but, oh, the terror! But I will, I will die with my full consciousness. No fear—no agony! The

abyss—the horror! But now . . . Joy . . .
Joy. . . . You!

Why have they awakened me once more?
Why lengthen the torture, was it not yet
enough? I was sleeping already holding
your hand. . . . All seemed done . . . and
now? . . . I don't find you any more . . .
Where? . . . Where was it? Waiting. . . .
Always waiting. . . .

And then? . . . Nothing!

EPILOGUE

MY sister who wrote these letters, our friend who was to have received them, are both at rest. She lies here within the sound of the Atlantic's roar, and he is buried in the distant Chinese earth.

In May 1900 we returned from Berlin, where my brother-in-law had died, after having been suffering for years from an incurable mental disease. I had hoped that after the weary oppressive day, life might perhaps yet bring the consolation of a brighter evening to my sister. It seemed to me as if unconscious of it herself, she was slowly reviving. But during the terrible weeks, when the whole civilised world was waiting in torturing suspense for news of the fate of the besieged foreigners in Peking, my sister was consumed by anxiety about our friend, and when the news of his death arrived, after we had already

firmly believed him to be saved, she pined away and died after a short time.

Later on I went to China, and my sister's letters were given to me. Our friend had never received them. He had had all his correspondence addressed to Shanghai, for his great exploration tour had been originally planned so as to bring him finally to Shanghai, and from that port he intended to sail home. But on his way he seems to have suddenly changed his route and decided to return to Peking, where he arrived just before the beginning of the siege of the Legations. He expected to find all his mail there, for on his way he had sent a telegraphic order to Shanghai to have everything forwarded to Peking, but the messenger whom he sent from some place in the interior to the next telegraphic station, which was many days distant, probably never reached his destination owing to the disturbances which were already then rapidly spreading. At all events his telegrams, as I ascertained since, never got to Shanghai, and no letters were awaiting him at Peking.

WHICH NEVER REACHED HIM 299

As soon as he arrived there he volunteered for service, and he was told off for the defence of the Su-wang-fu, where the three thousand Chinese Christian refugees had found shelter. His knowledge of the language, and the influence which he somehow always managed to obtain over the natives, rendered him particularly fit for this post. Much has been told to me since about his calmness and his utter fearlessness, which never left him in those weeks during which men had ample opportunity to show of what stuff they were made.

He was a victim of the last hour.

On the 13th of August, when the besieged already had positive news of the approach of the relief columns under generals Gaselee and Fukushima, the Chinese made a particularly fierce attack, as if they hoped to overwhelm yet that small force which had held out seven weeks. Ever since the early morning the bullets came flying over the barricades like hail. The attack against the Fu was especially hot. In the afternoon one of the Chinese refugees whom Col. Shiba had organised into

a watch troop was wounded there. Our friend at once rushed forward to carry the wounded man out of the range of the bullets, but in the same moment he fell himself, mortally hit.

In the evening they buried him.

The next day the relief columns entered the town.

Months passed after that before I arrived in Peking. Everything there reminded me of him and of her, although it was quite a different world which I found from the old Peking in which those two had lived. *That* has disappeared for ever. I have wandered a long time in the desolate town, and in the midst of all that devastation I have searched for memories and pictures of the past. But where once the ancient stone turtle stood and the wistaria bloomed, ruins and great heaps of wreckage were lying. Scarcely could one have named the place of our little house. Like a great weight the sorrow for what is irretrievably lost oppressed me.

No trace of him or her. As if it all had never been.

In the evening I sat a long while gazing at

my sister's letters that were spread out before me. At first, I had thought of burning them. A little smoke which rises through the chimney and loses itself in space.

A few sorrowful thoughts from some that are still left, but who soon will be gone too—and then a life's trace is lost. But I could not do it. The last that is left of those two are these letters. As I glanced through them I felt how they contained my sister's real life, her own self that has been dear to many; I felt how times that are past arose once more before me; I felt also how she who has gone seemed to come back to me, and with her, many memories of the wander-years we two have spent together. I could not burn these letters. I should have felt as if my sister's life once more were wantonly destroyed!

I hesitated a long while and finally decided to publish Her letters which never reached Him as a memorial to both. I added to them some pages on which she had been writing yet in her last hours, and which I found after her death. Perhaps these letters will bring a greeting to some friends who have known

those two in the old Peking; perhaps they will reach other lonely beings who yet are toiling on the great journey through life, and who will rest awhile by the roadside to listen to the voices of those that went before them, rising softly out of the Past.

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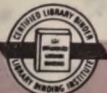


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